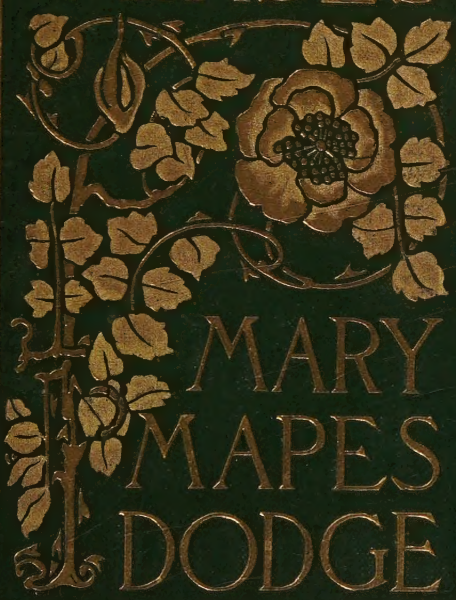
POEMS AND VERSES



MARY MAPES DODGE

POEMS AND VERSES

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BY

MARY MAPES DODGE

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TO
W. F. C.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

This book is, in the main, a republication of a former volume of verse entitled "Along the Way," which is now out of print. But to the poems which it contained are here added many others which have not before appeared in book form, together with a few rhymes culled — by request — from a book of verses for children, but appealing as directly, perhaps, to adult readers.

M. M. D.

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POEMS AND VERSES

ENFOLDINGS.

The snowflake that softly, all night, is whitening tree-top and pathway;
The avalanche suddenly rushing with darkness and death to the hamlet.

The ray stealing in through the lattice, to waken the day-loving baby;
The pitiless horror of light in the sun-smitten reach of the desert.

The seed with its wondrous surprise of welcome young leaflet and blossom;
The despair of the wilderness tangle, and grim, taunting forest unending.

The happy west wind as it startles some noon-laden flower from its dreaming;
The hurricane crashing its way through the homes and the life of the valley.

The play of the jetlets of flame where the children laugh out on the hearthstone;
The town and the prairie enswirled in the glare of the red devastation.

The glide of a wave on the sands with its myriad sparkle in breaking;
The roar and the fury of ocean, a limitless maelstrom of ruin.

The leaping of heart unto heart with bliss that can never be spoken;
The passion that maddens, and blights the God-given love that enshrines us.

For this do I tremble and start when the rose on the vine taps my shoulder;
For this when the storm beats me down, my soul groweth bolder and bolder.

INVERTED.

Youth has its griefs, its disappointments keen,
  Its baffled longings and its memories;
Its anguish in a joy that once hath been;
  Its languid settling in a sinful ease.

And age has pleasures, rosy, fresh and warm,
  And glad beguilements and expectancies;
Its heart of boldness for a threatened storm;
  Its eager launching upon sunny seas.

Youth has its losses, sad and desolate;
  Its wreck of precious freight where all was sent;
Its blight of trust, its helpless heart of fate,
  Its dreary knowledge of illusion spent.

For life is but a day; and, dawn or eve,
  The shadows must be long when suns are low.
Old age may be surprised and loth to leave;
  And youth may weary wait and long to go.

THE STARS.

They wait all day unseen by us, unfelt;
Patient they bide behind the noon's full glare;
And we who watched the dawn when they were there,
Thought we had seen them in the daylight melt,
While the slow sun upon the earth-line knelt.
Because the teeming sky seemed void and bare,
When we explored it through the dazzled air,
We had no thought that there all day they dwelt.

Yet were they over us, alive and true,
In the vast shades far up above the blue,—
The brooding shades beyond our daylight ken—
Serene and patient till, with conscious light,
They shine, resplendent, for our joy again,—
The eternal jewels of the short-lived night!

THE TWO MYSTERIES.

"In the middle of the room, near the coffin, sat Walt Whitman, holding a beautiful little girl on his lap. She looked wonderingly at the spectacle of death, and then inquiringly into the face of the aged poet. 'You don't know what it is, do you, my dear?' said he, and added, 'We don't, either.'"

We know not what it is, dear, this sleep so deep
and still;
The folded hands, the awful calm, the cheek so pale
and chill;
The lids that will not lift again, though we may call
and call;
The strange, white solitude of peace that settles over
all.

We know not what it means, dear, this desolate
heart-pain;
This dread to take our daily way, and walk in it
again;

We know not to what other sphere the loved who
leave us go,
Nor why we 're left to wonder still, nor why we do
not know.

But this we know: Our loved and dead, if they
should come this day—
Should come and ask us "What is life?" not one
of us could say.
Life is a mystery as deep as ever death can be;
Yet oh, how dear it is to us, this life we live
and see!

Then might they say—these vanished ones—and
blessèd is the thought:
"So death is sweet to us, beloved! though we may
show you naught;
We may not to the quick reveal the mystery of
death—
Ye cannot tell us, if ye would, the mystery of
breath."

The child who enters life comes not with knowledge
or intent,
So all who enter death must go as little children
sent.
Nothing is known. But, nearing God, what hath the
soul to dread?
And as life is to the living, so death is to the dead.

SHADOW-EVIDENCE.

I.

Swift o'er the sunny grass,
I saw a shadow pass
With subtle charm;
So quick, so full of life,
With thrilling joy so rife,
I started lest, unknown,
My step—ere it was flown—
Had done it harm.

II.

Why look up to the blue?
The bird was gone, I knew,
Far out of sight.
Steady and keen of wing,
The slight, impassioned thing,

Intent on a goal unknown,
Had held its course alone
In silent flight.

III.

Dear little bird, and fleet,
Flinging down at my feet
Shadow for song:
More sure am I of thee—
Unseen, unheard by me—
Than of some things felt and known,
And guarded as my own,
All my life long.

BY THE LAKE.

I LISTEN to the plashing of the lake,—
  The tideless tide that silvers all its edge,
  And stirs, yet rouses not, the sleepy sedge,—
While the glad, busy sky is wide awake,
And pools along the shore its fleeting shadows take.

I listen to the plashing, clear and faint;
  Now sharp against the stones that slide it back,
  Now soft and nestling in a mossy track,
Or rocking in an eager, homeless plaint,
Or stifled in the ooze, whose yielding is restraint.

Nature's deep lessons come in silences,
  Or sounds that fall like silence on our sense;
  And so this plashing seeks my soul's pretense,
And bids it say what its fulfillment is,
And bares to searching light its fond alliances.

I cannot fathom all my soul doth hide,
Nor sound the centres that the waves conceal;
Yet in a dim, half-yearning way I feel
The urging of the low, insistent tide,—
Till the plashing seems like sobbing, and the sky
grows cold and wide.

HEART-ORACLES.

By the motes do we know where the sunbeam is slanting;
Through the hindering stones speaks the soul of the brook;
Past the rustle of leaves we press in to the stillness;
Through darkness and void to the Pleiads we look;
The silence of dawn with the night-shadows o'er us,
Begins all the morning's munificent chorus.

Through sorrow come glimpses of infinite gladness;
Through grand discontent mounts the spirit of youth;
Loneliness foldeth a wonderful loving;
The breakers of Doubt lead the great tide of Truth;
And dread and grief-haunted the shadowy portal
That shuts from our vision the splendor immortal.

THERE 'S A WEDDING IN THE ORCHARD.

THERE 's a wedding in the orchard,
I know it by the flowers;
They 're wreathed on every bough and branch,
Or falling down in showers.

The air is in a mist, I think,
And scarce knows which to be—
Whether all fragrance, clinging close,
Or bird-song, wild and free.

And countless wedding-jewels shine,
And golden gifts of grace;
I never saw such wealth of sun
In any shady place.

It seemed I heard the fluttering robes
Of maidens clad in white,

The clasping of a thousand hands
  In tenderest delight;

While whispers ran among the boughs
  Of promises and praise;
And playful, loving messages
  Sped through the leaf-lit ways.

Then were there swayings to and fro;
  The weeds a-tiptoe rose;
And sang the breeze a sudden song
  That sank to sudden close;

And just beyond the wreathèd aisles
  That end against the blue,
The raiment of the silent choir
  And priest came shining through.

And though I saw no wedding-guest,
  Nor groom, nor gentle bride,
I know that holy things were said,
  And holy love replied.

Soon will the lengthening shadows move
  Unwillingly away,
Like friends who linger with adieux
  Yet are not bid to stay.

I follow with the vesper bird,
  And hear its soft "good-night,"
Still thinking of the wedding-scene
  And aisles of flowery light.

TRUST.

Though tangled hard life's knot may be,
And wearily we rue it,
The silent touch of Father Time
Some day will sure undo it.
Then hope and wait;
Nothing is late
In the light that shines forever.

We faint at heart, a friend is gone;
We chafe at the world's harsh drilling;
We tremble at sorrows on every side,
At the myriad ways of killing.
Yet, say we all,
If a sparrow fall,
The Lord keepeth count forever.

He keepeth count. We come, we go,
We speculate, toil and falter:
But the measure to each of weal or woe,
God only can give or alter.

He sendeth light,
He sendeth night,
And change goes on forever.

Why not take life with cheerful trust,
With faith in the strength of weakness?
The slenderest daisy rears its head
With courage, yet with meekness.
A sunny face
Hath holy grace,
To woo the sun forever.

Forever and ever God's law prevails,
Goodness and love are undying;
Only the troubles and cares of earth
Are winged from the first for flying.
Our way we plow
In the furrow "now";
But after the tilling and growing, the sheaf;
Soil for the root, but the sun for the leaf,—
And God keepeth watch forever.

WITH "H. H." IN COLORADO.

INTENT the conscious mountains stood,
The friendly blossoms nodded,
As through the cañon's lonely wood
We two in silence plodded.
The stillness owned our presence good;
The very breeze that stirred our hair
Whispered a gentle greeting;
A grand, free courtesy was there,
A welcome, from the summit bare
Down to the brook's entreating.

Stray warblers in the branches dark
Shot through the leafy passes,
While the long note of meadow-lark
Rose from the neighboring grasses;
The yellow lupines, spark on spark,

From the more open woodland way,
Flashed through the sunlight faintly;
A wind-blown little flower, once gay,
Looked up between its petals gray
And smiled a message saintly.

The giant ledges, red and seamed,
The clear, blue sky, tree-fretted;
The mottled light that round us streamed,
The brooklet, vexed and petted;
The bees that buzzed, the gnats that dreamed,
The flitting, gauzy things of June;
The plain, far-off, like misty ocean,
Or, cloud-land bound, a fair lagoon,—
They sang within us like a tune,
They swayed us like a dream of motion.

The hours went loitering to the West,
The shadows lengthened slowly;
The radiant snow on mountain crest
Made all the distance holy.
Near by, the earth lay full of rest,

The sleepy foot-hills, one by one,
Dimpled their way to twilight;
And ere the perfect day was done,
There came long gleams of tinted sun
Through heaven's crimson sky-light.

Slowly crept on the listening night,
The sinking moon shone pale and slender;
We hailed the cotton-woods, in sight,
The home-roof gleaming near and tender,
Guiding our quickened steps aright.
Soon darkened all the mighty hills,
The gods were sitting there in shadow;
Lulled were the noisy woodland rills,
Silent the silvery woodland trills,—
'T was starlight over Colorado!

THE HUMAN TIE.

"*As if life were not sacred, too.*"—GEORGE ELIOT.

"SPEAK tenderly! For he is dead," we say;
"With gracious hand smooth all his roughened past,
And fullest measure of reward forecast,
Forgetting naught that gloried his brief day."
Yet of the brother, who, along our way,
Prone with his burdens, heart-worn in the strife,
Totters before us—how we search his life,
Censure, and sternly punish, while we may.
Oh, weary are the paths of Earth, and hard!
And living hearts alone are ours to guard.
At least, begrudge not to the sore distraught
The reverent silence of our pitying thought.
Life, too, is sacred; and he best forgives
Who says: "He errs, but—tenderly! He lives."

FROM FLOWER TO LIGHT.

In sorrow I tended my garden,
  As the colors, day by day,
Faded and changed in the heedless air,
  And passed with the summer away.

While they gladdened my beautiful garden,
  Where the dews and the sunlight abide,
And crept up the wall to my window,
  Or hid, as the sweetest will hide;

While they lavished their splendor before me,
  Not a flower had I heart to cull—
Till the heaven-lit flames of the latest
  Went out, and my garden was dull.

O cruel the death of the blossoms,
And cruel the words that were said:
"Next Spring shall the earth be re-gladdened,
The living shall bloom from the dead."

Not for me would the blooming be, ever,
For my love, O my love! could not stay.
Hand in hand we had bent o'er their brightness,
And now he was passing away.

The heart-breaking flowers of next summer,
They will look at me, dreary and wan,
Or mock me, and taunt me, and madden—
O God, that the years should roll on!

So I felt; and I would not look skyward,
Nor earthward, but only at him—
At him with his clear dying vision,
Who saw not the earth growing dim.

At him, till alone in the garden
I stood with the husks of the flowers;

Alone, and the pitiless Autumn
Sent dead leaves about me, in showers.

"Look up!" he had whispered in parting;
"Look up!" said a voice to me then,—
And lo! the lost hues of my garden
Above me were glowing again!

Near by, in the wide-spreading maples;
Far-off, in the mist of the wood;
Around and above me they gathered,
And lit all the place where I stood.

My purples, my rose-tints and yellows,
My crimsons that gladdened his sight,
My glorious hues of the garden
Were living in sunnier height!

Were living! were living! I knew it!
And the comfort that came to me so,
Endured when the forest was naked
And the grass covered over with snow.

For again I looked up and beheld them,
The souls of the flowers he had blest;
I saw them in glory transfigured
Far off in the wonderful West.

Contented, at last, I beheld them—
My colors immortal and bright—
Till the gates of the sunset, slow-folding,
Shut them out from my passionate sight.

OVER THE WORLD.

THERE is a time between our night and day,
A space between this world and the unknown,
Where none may enter as we stand alone
Save the one other single soul that may;
Then is all perfect if the two but stay.
It is the time when, the home-evening flown,
And "good-nights" sped in happy household tone,
We look out from the casement ere we pray.
Into the world of darkness deep and far
We gaze—each depth with its own deepest star,
That brightens as we turn, nor yet recedes
When we would search it with our sorest needs,—
O holy living-ground from heaven won!
O time beyond the night when day is done!

EMERSON.

We took it to the woods, we two,
The book well worn and brown,
To read his words where stirring leaves
Rained their soft shadows down.

Yet as we sat and breathed the scene,
We opened not a page;
Enough that he was with us there,
Our silent, friendly sage!

His fresh "Rhodora" bloomed again;
His "Humble-bee" buzzed near;
And oh, the "Wood-notes" beautiful
He taught our souls to hear!

So our unopened book was read;
And so, in restful mood,
We and our poet, well content,
Went sauntering through the wood.

ONCE BEFORE.

Once before, this self-same air
Passed me, though I know not where.
Strange! how very like it came!
Touch and fragrance were the same;
Sound of mingled voices, too,
With a light laugh ringing through;
Some one moving—here or there—
Some one passing up the stair,
Some one calling from without,
Or a far-off childish shout;
Simple, home-like, nothing more,—
Yet it all hath been before!

Not to-day, nor yesterday,
Nor any day. But far away—
So long ago, so very far,
It might have been on other star.

How was it spent? and where? and when?
This life that went, yet comes again?
Was sleep its world, or death its shore?
I still the silent Past implore.
Ah! never dream had power to show
Such vexing glimpse of Long Ago.
Never a death could follow death
With love between, and home, and breath.

The spell has passed. What spendthrifts we,
Of simple, household certainty!
What golden grain we trample low
Searching for flowers that never grow!
For home is real, and love is real;
Nor false our honest high ideal.
Life, it is bounding, warm and strong,
And all my heart resounds with song.
It must be true, whate'er befall,
This, and the world to come are all.
And yet it puzzles me—alack!
When life that could not be, comes back!

WHIP-POOR-WILL.

The Western sky blazed through the trees,
And in the East the dove-light shone;
Low fields of clover to the breeze
Gave out a fragrant monotone;
While sharp-voiced, whirring things beyond
Sent a faint treble through the air,
And discords of the hidden pond
Pulsed like an anthem, deep and rare.
Yet all the twilight range seemed still,
The tumult was so subtle-sweet;
When forth it burst,—clear, slow, complete,
The evening call of
"*Whip-poor-will!*"

The yarrow, crowding by the hedge,
  Stirred not its specked, uncertain white;
The locust on the upland's edge
  Stood tranced against the blaze of light;
For now the throbbing air was mute,
  Since that wild note had pierced it through,—
That call so clear, so resolute,
  So tender, dominant and true.
When suddenly, across the hill,—
  Long, low and sweet, with dreamy fall,
  Yet true and mellow, call for call,
Elate, and with a human thrill,—
Came the far answer:
  "*Whip-poor-will!*"

LONG AGO.

Still the rock is in the forest,
With the branches overhead,
And the linden-tree, low-bending
By the sumac, flaming red.
In and out among the shadows
Glides the self-same woodland stream;
Still the bright-eyed squirrels listen,
And the beetles idly dream.

Do the squirrels hear a foot-fall,
Or the beetles flash their green
For a hand that parts the branches,
Letting sun-light in between?
Does the brook, with rippling lightness,
Catch two shadows—his and mine—
Give them to its circling eddies
With a murmuring divine?

Do the lichens, gray and clinging,
Hear a promise whispered there,
While the ferns look up and listen,
Laughing through the maiden-hair?
Do the birds that fill the distance,
Or the glints of summer blue,
Try to sing and shine love's gladness
As of old they used to do?

Ah, for comfort of all rovers,
Such as I, in stranger clime;
Sure as sunlight, new-made lovers
Roam to-day the summer's prime.
Heaven spare the fields their brightness!
Spare the brook its sparkling flow!
Light the woods with holy shadows
As it lit them long ago!

THE CHILD AND THE SEA.

One Summer day, when birds flew high,
I saw a child step into the sea;
It glowed, and sparkled at her touch,
And softly plashed about her knee.
It held her lightly with its strength,
It kissed and kissed her silken hair;
It swayed with tenderness to know
A little child was in its care.

She, gleeful, dipped her pretty arms,
And caught the sparkles in her hands;
I heard her laughter, as she soon
Came skipping up the sunny sands.
"Is this the cruel sea?" I thought,
"The merciless, the awful sea?"—
Now hear the answer soft and true,
That rippled over the beach to me:

"Shall not the sea, in the sun, be glad
When a child doth come to play?
Had it been in the storm-time, what could I,
The sea, but bear her away—
Bear her away on my foaming crest,
Toss her and hurry her to her rest?

"Be it life or death, God ruleth me;
And He loveth every soul;
I've an earthly shore and a heavenly shore,
And toward them both I roll;
Shining and beautiful, both, are they,—
And a little child will go God's way."

THE COMPACT.

It was a little boy who lived in Philadelphia town,
And a very kind old gentleman, whose name was Mr. Brown.
It happened that the self-same day they visited the Fair,
And, hand in hand, they walked about, a happy, friendly pair.

The little boy looked right and left with eager, wondering eyes,
The other gazed more steadily, for he was old and wise;
But soon he caught the small boy's way of feeling glad and bright;
And the boy no longer aimlessly looked to the left and right.

"I like you, Mr. Brown," he said. "You make me understand."

"I like *you*, too," thought Mr. Brown, and pressed the little hand.

And so they walked together, and saw the mighty show,

While music, light, and brilliant hues set all the crowd aglow.

Then, suddenly, a shadow fell upon the old man's face;

He fixed his eyes right wistfully upon the wondrous place.

"Ah, me! ah, me!" he muttered, as to himself, nor smiled

At the merry look of questioning that came upon the child.

"My boy, a hundred years from now, another mighty Fair

Will crown the new Centennial; but we shall not be there.

Not one of all this eager crowd" (and here he drew
a sigh)
"Will be living on the earth that day—not even you
and I.

"The years will bring discoveries, inventions, man-
ners new,
And nations yet unborn may shame the things that
here we view.
I own I 'd like to see it all, the next Centennial
Fair,
With the Stars and Stripes that day, as now, flung
gayly to the air.

"I 'd like to see the world grown wiser, better, too,
my lad
(Though I 'm not one of those who think this world
is wholly bad).
I 'd like to see the country shine with nobler, holier
grace,
And the Church of Christ triumphant in the manners
of a race.

"It 's useless to regret, I know; our life is but a span.
We 'll all be gone before that day; yes, all, my little man."
Then Brown, he wiped his spectacles, and gave a quiet cough;
But the little boy said: "Never mind, it 's such a long way off."

"Yes, long for you, perhaps, my boy; but *my* life 's nearly spent.
Yet, if I knew just how the world would grow, I 'd be content."
The little boy stopped short, with: "Here are benches, let 's sit down.
I 'll tell you what I 'll do for you, with pleasure, Mr. Brown.

"When I get big, I 'll notice sharp just what the people do,
And how they live, how good they are—I 'll watch them just for you.

And then I 'll tell some little boy (not born yet) he must keep
A sharp lookout, and, don't you see? in time he 'll learn a heap.

"Well, when I 'm old, I 'll say to him what you have said to-day:
'My boy, my time is nearly spent; I 'll soon be going away;
I can't see the Centennial that 's coming soon, I know;
But you will see it, certainly, before you have to go.

"'Now, I 'm going,' I 'll say, 'to Heaven; and when you come there, too,
You can tell me all about the show, and what you saw there new,
And how the people looked and did in Philadelphia town,
For I want to tell a friend of mine up there, named Mr. Brown.'"

He ceased. The old man stared, then smiled and
stroked the sunny head.
"Thank you, my boy, I 'll count on you." And
that was all they said.
Then, quite content and glad again, the mighty show
they scanned,—
The old man and the little boy,—still walking hand
in hand.

DEATH IN LIFE.

She sitteth there a mourner,
With her dead before her eyes;
Flushed with the hues of life is he
And quick are his replies.
Often his warm hand touches hers;
Brightly his glances fall;
And yet, in this wide world, is she
The loneliest of all.

Some mourners feel their dead return
In dreams, or thoughts at even;
Ah, well for them their best-beloved
Are faithful still in heaven!
But woe to her whose best-beloved,
Though dead, still lingers near;
So far away when by her side,
He cannot see nor hear.

With heart intent, he comes, he goes
  In busy ways of life.
His gains and chances fill his thoughts;
  His hours with joy are rife.
Careless he greets her day by day,
  Nor thinks of words once said.—
Oh, would that love could live again,
  Or her heart give up its dead!

BY MOONLIGHT.

Out of the depths above shone forth
The beautiful, radiant orb of light;
Paling the stars near by, she rose,
Queen of the spheres and the limitless night.

Four of us glided along in the boat,—
Rhoda and Etta, Harry and I,—
Cheerily watching the glory that streamed
Across the sea from the bending sky.

Etta spoke first, and her voice seemed far:
"The sparkling line, however we turn,
Comes straight to me!" But I claimed it, too,
I at the bow, and she at the stern.

We laughed, insisting; then Rhoda, between: —
"Absurd! for it comes to me, not you—
A beautiful, silvery ribbon of light,
Crinkling and shining across the blue."

Then Harry, the rower: "By all that 's bright
It flashes its course direct to me!"
Thus merry, intent and apart we sat,
Claiming the splendor that crossed the sea

Till Rhoda, the fairy, proposed a plan
(A friskier sailor was never afloat);
And then, with many a laugh and start,
We all changed seats in the rocking boat.

O human vision, how blind it is!
'T was plain, at last, that our partial sight
Had made the glory that shone for all
To each seem a narrow pathway bright.

Shining, arose on the breast of the sea,
A lesson in love, a thought of grace:

Learn thou to look for the Heavenly light
Not alone from thine own, but thy neighbor's place.

Four of us glided home in the boat,
Rhoda and Etta, Harry and I,
Thoughtfully watching the glory that streamed
Over the sea from the silent sky.

THE MASTER HAND.

Life is a picture, warm and grand,
Of varied colors made;
Each touch is by the Master's hand,
And His the light and shade.

These tints so strong and fresh and bright —
Ah, here the foreground glows!
Some souls are brave and gladly right,
And God, the Master, knows.

What though He wills my lines must be
Obscure and gray and drear?
His picture was in need of me,
And He hath set me here.

My shadow may bring out, intent,
The brightness of a soul
That must be free and prominent
To make the perfect whole.

Or, it may be, a sadder lot,
A colder dash of gray,
Falls somewhere near, and mine is not
The very darkest way.

We cannot change us by a tint,
Nor guide our lines alone;
But we may catch His subtlest hint,
And hold it as our own.

To learn and heed the Master's will,
And rightly do our part,
To bow before Almighty skill,
And reverence His art —

Content and blest one touch to be —
This is enough, O Soul!
When God, for all Eternity,
His picture shall unroll.

ELBERON.

(1881.)

I. JULY.

We watched the little children by the sea
  Tempting the wave with mimic forts of sand;
Hillock and pit they modeled in their glee,
  Laughing to see them leveled on the strand.
Deep was the music of the breakers' roar,
And bright the spray they tossed upon the shore;
Fresh gales of joy blew landward, but in vain:
The Nation's heart was heavy with its pain.

II. AUGUST.

The little children skipping by the sea,
  Bare-limbed and merry, challenge its advance;
Holding the sunlight in their hair, they flee
  The prone wave's tumult while they shout and dance:
But he who suffers far away grows faint
With longing for the seaside cheer and plaint;—

Ah, bright the tide, and blue the bending sky,
While stately ships, intent, go sailing by!

III. SEPTEMBER.

What power was this? No tumult on the deep!
The conscious waves crept whispering to the sand;
The very children, awed and eager, keep
The spell of silence holding sea and land.
White wings of healing filled the summer sky,
And prayerful thousands stood expectant by,
While, borne on bed of hope, content and wan,
The Nation's Man came into Elberon.

. . . . . .

"'T is well!" the news sped gladly, day by day,—
"Old Ocean sends its strengthening breeze apace!"
Grandly, above the sparkling wavelets' play,
Our country's banner floated in its grace —
When, suddenly, grim shadows gathered near
To overwhelm us with a nameless fear;

Till all along Atlantic's sobbing sands —
Far as it rims our own and other lands,
Across the world, what spot the sun shines on —
Sounded the tidings dread:
The President is dead!
A Nation's grief broods over Elberon.

BLOOM.

The sudden sun shone through the pane
And lighted both their faces—
A prettier sight just after rain
Ne'er fell in pleasant places:

Two girls. One held a graceful glass,
And one a bulb unsightly,
Ragged and soiled. And this the lass
Upon the vase laid lightly.

"What lovely flowers we 'll have," said they,
"After it starts a-growing!"
The sun, delighted, slipped away
And down the west went glowing.

SNOW-FLAKES.

Whenever a snow-flake leaves the sky,
It turns and turns to say "Good-bye!
Good-bye, dear cloud, so cool and gray!"
Then lightly travels on its way.

And when a snow-flake finds a tree,
"Good-day!" it says—"Good-day to thee!
Thou art so bare and lonely, dear,
I 'll rest, and call my comrades here."

But when a snow-flake, brave and meek,
Lights on a rosy maiden's cheek,
It starts—"How warm and soft the day!
'T is summer!"—and it melts away.

THE TROUBLED MAID.

A VILLAGE maiden lightly trod
Her lonely way to the house of God.
And there the words that met her ear
Were bitter words for a maid to hear.
For they said the world was bad to the core,
And the heart of the maiden grew faint and sore.

As homeward then she went her way,
Her path through a lovely woodland lay;
And stooping to pluck a rose, she caught
Only the thorns. Alas! she thought,
Dear Lord in heaven, must this be so?
Do thorns forever with roses grow?
In all this beautiful world and dear
Must sin and woe lurk hidden near?

Then, tenderly pressing the flower to her face,
Breathing its sweetness and holy with grace,
She said as she bent her fair head down:
"With roses and thorns we must weave our crown;
God is our Father, and he is good."
And her way grew bright through the lonely wood.

FAITH.

The wind drove the moon
  To a sky-built cave,
And closed it up
  As it were her grave.
The cave threw wide
  A silver portal —
And forth she came,
  Serene, immortal!

He piled black clouds
  In angry might,
Till lost in gloom
  Was all her light.
The clouds a moment
  Held her under;
Then, glorified,
  They burst asunder!

The wind, that night,
  Bemoaned and whistled
Till all the forest
  Stirred and bristled;
While moonbeams stole
  To tear-wet pillows,
And found their way
  Through grave-yard willows.

THE EASTER MORN.

Between rude March and the bright May weather —
The bluster and dearth and the willow's green feather —
Tipped with jewels and warm with Spring,
Raindrop, and blossom, and song a-wing,

Full of promise and tender cheer,
Glowing aloft and lighting a-near
Day when a deathless hope was born —
Dawneth the radiant Easter morn!

After the watching, and fasting, and sadness,
Cometh peace and the answering gladness,
Whispering unto the weary soul:
"Past be all conflict, doubting, and dole."

Ah, for the joy that hath promise to live!
Ah, for the yearning to help and forgive!
This is the Easter we long for and choose!
This is the Easter we turn from and lose!

"THOUGHTS ARE THINGS."

If times be hard and dollars few
When Christmas-tide draws near,
And hearty kindliness — ah, me! —
Knows it must empty-handed be,
Still are there needs that wait for you:
Some cloud to rift with sunny blue,
Some life that halts with hindering fear,
Lacking the simple gift of cheer.

Thoughts are our riches, bounteous, free;
We need not empty-handed be!
Obey the oracle divine
That makes our inmost self its shrine.
Harken:
"Give vexing care swift wings,
And to your soul hold near

Only the thought that softly sings,
That brings you hope, and light, and cheer;
For *thoughts are things.*
Know that mere gifts of compliment
Wax poor ere Christmas lights are spent.
Remember,—and no longer sigh,—
The rarest gifts that gold can buy
Have little worth, however fair,
If strain of purse or anxious care
Hath robbed them of their true intent."

From friend to friend, the choicest gift
That ever love can give
Is that which comes the heart to lift
Or help the soul to live.
Of all fair bounties ever bought,
Of gems or jewels rare,
What treasure like a loving thought,
Or love's far-reaching prayer!

Courage, and trust, and peace of mind,
Faith in the good in humankind,

These — ah, believe it! — if love brings
At Christmas-tide, are love's own best;
Yea, gifts more real than all the rest:
For *thoughts are things.*

IN THE NAME OF THE KING.

(Written for the Album of the Children's Building, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893.)

Every day of every year is the New World discovered
By one, by two, by many who gain a wondrous land.
At first they cry, then laugh, then creep, and then, O joy!
they stand;
Adventurous, with outstretched arm they straightway
take command,
While subjects true kneel worshiping with bowed heads
and uncovered.

TO MERODINE.

1895 — October 26 — 1896.

Little builder of a year,—
With many a smile and scarce a tear,—
Ah, what wonders thou hast wrought
In the realms of love and thought!
Thine the rounding of the sphere—
Little builder of a year!

THE NIGHTLY REST.

A FOLDING darkness hangs before the dawn,
Twin curtain with our sleep;
And when they part, with mystic, dreamy sweep,
The Day smiles in our face, and we awake,
Ready once more life's noisy ways to take
Till by veiled Night the folds again are drawn.

VERS-DE-SOCIÉTÉ
AND
RANDOM RHYMES

THE MINUET.

GRANDMA told me all about it,
Told me so I could n't doubt it,
How she danced — my Grandma danced! —
Long ago.
How she held her pretty head,
How her dainty skirt she spread,
Turning out her little toes;
How she slowly leaned and rose —
Long ago.

Grandma's hair was bright and sunny;
Dimpled cheeks, too — ah, how funny!
Really quite a pretty girl,
Long ago.
Bless her! why, she wears a cap,
Grandma does, and takes a nap
Every single day; and yet
Grandma danced the minuet
Long ago.

Now she sits there, rocking, rocking,
Always knitting Grandpa's stocking—
(Every girl was taught to knit
Long ago.)
Yet her figure is so neat,
And her ways so staid and sweet,
I can almost see her now
Bending to her partner's bow,
Long ago.

Grandma says our modern jumping,
Hopping, rushing, whirling, bumping,
Would have shocked the gentle folk
Long ago.
No—they moved with stately grace,
Everything in proper place,
Gliding slowly forward, then
Slowly courtseying back again,
Long ago.

Modern ways are quite alarming,
Grandma says; but boys were charming—

Girls and boys, I mean, of course—
Long ago.
Brave but modest, grandly shy,—
She would like to have us try
Just to feel like those who met
In the graceful minuet
Long ago.

Were the minuet in fashion,
Who could fly into a passion?
All would wear the calm they wore
Long ago.
In time to come, if I, perchance,
Should tell my grandchild of *our* dance,
I should really like to say:
"We did it, dear, in stately way,
Long ago."

"WHAT 'S IN A NAME."

Once on a time, where jewels flashed
And rose-hid fountains softly plashed,
And all the air was sweet and bright
With music, mirth and deft delight—
A courtly dame drew, smiling, near
  A poet, greatest of his time,
And chirped a question in his ear
  With voice like silver bells in chime:
"Good Master Shakespeare, I would know
  The name thy lady bore, in sooth,
Ere thine? Nay, little while ago
  It was, for still we see her youth.
Some high-born name, I trow, and yet
Though I have heard it, I forget."
    Then answered he,
    With dignity,
  Yet blithely, as the hour was gay:
    "Ann Hathaway."

"And good, sweet sir," the dame pursued,
Too fair and winsome to be rude—
"'T is hinted here, and whispered there,
By doughty knights and ladies fair,
That—that—well, that her loyal lord
Doth e'en obey her slightest will.
Now, my good spouse, I pledge my word,
Though loving well, doth heed me ill.
Her witchery I pray thee tell,"
She pleaded, with a pretty frown,
"I fain would know what mighty spell
Can bring a haughty husband down."
Flushing, she raised her eager face
To his, with merry, plaintive grace.
Then answered he,
With dignity,
Yet blithely, as the hour was gay:
"Fair lady, I can only say,
Ann hath a way."

THE LETTER.

My letter is finished; but how shall it end?
Shall I sign it just "Bertha McCaul"?
It 's so awkward to write to a gentleman friend,
And to Charlie it 's hardest of all.

Shall I say, "Yours respectfully"? Horrible! No,
That would be quite insulting, I 'm sure;
Or "Cordially yours"? or "Your friend So-and-so"?
These phrases I cannot endure!

Well, "Sincerely your friend"? No, that is n't quite true.
Or "Yours to command"? That 's too meek.
"Yours as ever"? Oh, shocking! That never would do —
We were strangers till Michaelmas week.

I have it! I 've written quite fast (we 'll suppose).
"Yours in haste." Ah, that hardly sounds right!
He may take it in literal earnest,— who knows? —
Which would put me in rather a plight.

Dear me! How perplexing! There *is* an expression
That might tell what he never must know —
And yet, though it almost would be a confession,
He 'd hardly interpret it so.

'T is so common to use it; I 've written it often,
But ne'er felt its meaning before.
He 'll never suspect (ah, I see his eye soften
While scanning my note o'er and o'er).

So I 'll say it. Why not? What harm can it do?
'T is written; and now past all mending.
"Yours truly" — I feel as if somehow he knew,
Though it 's really a commonplace ending.

MARY, THE COOK.

It is strange what a world of romance,
What a 'wildering, witching spell,
Hangs about Mary, the cook.
Why, it 's music to sit in *her* silence,
And (I 'm not ashamed to tell)
It 's heaven to catch but her look.
She, rubbing the lamps, well might madden
The stoniest slave of Aladdin —
In short, if you wish to know sweetness
And deftness and magical neatness,
You 've only to look
At Mary, the cook.

You see, as we 're all on a picnic,
Some duties must fall to the girls:

So Mary is boiling the tea.
Ah, who would n't be an old kettle
To mirror those tumbled curls,
And sing near her heart for glee!
Charley and Kate, by the beeches,
Are opening pickles and peaches;
The others devising a table;
While I, like the fox in the fable,
Sit vainly and look
At Mary, the cook.

She 's "steady" — I 'd swear it. And "sober"?
Well, no — by that mischievous laugh!
"Willing"? A fellow can't tell,
Though she knows how I long to ask her,
Or guesses it more than half,
Which answers nearly as well.
Shall I ask her? (But ah, what effront'ry —
The stunningest girl in the country!)
To always be — Jove! Is she flushing
Over that fire — or — blushing?

What if I rose and "took"
Mary, the cook!

. . . . . .

Mine! by the grand old beeches!
Mine! by the pickles and peaches!
Mine! by the rippling brook!
Mine! by the sunset splendor!
Mine! by the starlight tender!
Mary, the cook!

LITTLE WORDS.

How wise he is! He can talk in Greek!
There is n't a language he cannot speak.
The very measure the Psalmist sung
He carries at will on the tip of his tongue.
When he argues in English, why, every word
Is almost the biggest that ever you heard!
That is, when he talks with Papa it 's so—
With me it 's another affair, you know.

Little one-syllable words, you see,
Are all he is willing to waste upon me;
So he calls me his rose, his bird, his pet,
And says it quite often, lest I should forget;

While his wonderful verbs grow meagre and small;
You 'd think he had ne'er opened Rogèt at all.
It 's only: "Ah, do you?" or "Will you, my dove?"
Or else it 's: "I love," "I love," and "I love."

And when we walk out in the starry night,
Though he knows the Zodiac's rounded height,
With its Gemini, Scorpio, Leo, and all,
Its nebulæ, planets, and satellites small,
And though, in a flash, he could turn his proud eye on
The Dipper, and Crown, and the Belt of Orion;—
Not once does he mention the wonders above,
But just whispers softly: "My own!", and "I love!"

Whenever they tease me—the girls and boys—
With: "Mrs. Professor," or "classical joys,"
Or ask if his passion he deigns to speak
In Hebrew, or Sanscrit or simple Greek,—
I try to summon a look of steel,
And hide the joy that I really feel.
For they 'd laugh still more if they knew the truth
How meek a professor can be, forsooth!

Though well I know, in the days to come
Great thoughts shall preside in our happy home;
And to hold forever his loving looks
I must bend my head over musty books,
And be as learned as ever I can
To do full justice to such a man,—
The future is bright, for, like song of birds,
My soul is filled with his little words.

A THANKSGIVING PARTY.

Banks and his wife consulted,
One bright November day,
Planning a princely dinner
In a pleasant, airy way.
"We 'll have a grand Thanksgiving,"
Said Banks; "and, Polly dear,
You get the guests together,
And I 'll provide the cheer."

Then Banks, with heart o'erflowing,
Said, "Now 's the time, my dear,
To ask one's wife's relations;
So let them all be here.
Yes, ask them all, my darling;
Your husband 's not the man
To stop half-way in making
A pleasant family plan."

So Polly asked her people
(And they were not a few)—
Papa, mama, and brothers,
And all her sisters, too.
These brought their little children—
A laughing, romping crowd;
And in the after-dinner speech
Banks really did feel "proud."

Yet through it all a shadow
Into his bosom stole:
He knew what bills were coming in;
They paralyzed his soul!
He knew that Mother Pippling
Was whispering good advice
In Polly's ear, and, somehow,
That was n't very nice.

He knew the romping children
Had done him damage dire
(For Banks had dainty furniture
As any could desire);

But still the guests were merry;
The dinner "went off well,"
In spite of many vexing things
One does n't care to tell.

And when, at last, 't was over,
And ev'ry guest gone home,
The tumbled house quite still again,
And resting-time had come,
Sweet Mrs. Banks said cheerily:
"My dear, how kind of them
To come to us! Though mother—"
(Banks softly coughed "Ahem!")

"Yes, mother noticed — bless her! —
One slight omission, dear:
She said Thanksgiving dinners
Without one 'thank' were queer.
I know you don't say grace, dear;
But does n't it seem to you
That to give thanks at such a time
Is what one ought to do?"

He fell into a reverie.
"You 're right!" he sighed at last;
"Thank Heaven the thing is over;
They 're gone, and all is past!"
And so, in simple language,
By that good husband Banks,
The grand Thanksgiving dinner
Was crowned by hearty thanks.

OVER THE WAY.

Over the way, over the way,
I 've seen a head that 's fair and gray;
I 've seen kind eyes not new to tears,
A form of grace, though full of years —
  Her fifty summers have left no flaw —
And I, a youth of twenty-three,
So love this lady, fair to see,
  I want her for my mother-in-law!

Over the way, over the way,
I 've seen her with the children play;
I 've seen her with a royal grace
Before the mirror adjust her lace;
  A kinder woman none ever saw;
God bless and cheer her onward path,
And bless all treasures that she hath,
  And let her be my mother-in-law!

Over the way, over the way,
I think I 'll venture, dear, some day
(If you will lend a helping hand,
And sanctify the scheme I 've planned);
I 'll kneel in loving, reverent awe
Down at the lady's feet, and say:
"I 've loved your daughter many a day—
Please won't you be my mother-in-law?"

I LOVE MY LOVE.

"I LOVE my love with a Y,
Because he is *young*," answered I.
We were only playing a game,
But I spoke in truth, all the same,
And pretended I did not see
The glance that came flashing to me.

When next my turn came around
I cast my eyes to the ground
With "I love my love with a G,
Because he is *graceful* and free."
And there he sat, wondering, by,
Quite lame!—*that* I could n't deny.

And soon, when they wanted to know
Why I loved my love with an O,

I said, with an air of content,
"Why, because he is *opulent*."
Then he knew, for he smiled at the word—
Though you would n't have thought that he heard.

Yes, older than I very much,
And walking, poor dear! with a crutch,
And nothing in bank, so they say,
But the little he earns day by day—
Yet young as a child, and his ways
Are graceful beyond poet's praise.
And rich? It was only a game,
Yet I answered in truth, all the same.

SUMMER LONGINGS.

Down by the sea, down by the sea,
A cool, sandy beach lies a-waiting for me,
The waves they may plash;
The surf it may dash —
Be it sunshine or storm, for my coming they wait,
Starfish and mussel and sweet-smiling skate,—
All things of the sea
Are waiting for me.

Down by the sea, down by the sea,
A breezy piazza is waiting for me;
And tennis; cool drinks;
And golf on the links;
And music at nightfall, with lamps on the lawn,
And the surf rolling madly from midnight till dawn,—
All joys of the sea
Are waiting for me.

Down by the sea, down by the sea,
A beautiful maiden is waiting for me;
I know not her name,
Nor wherefore she came;
But I know, by the moon overhead, that it shines
On the shore where a summer girl wanders and pines,—
(The maiden, you see,
Who 's waiting for me.)

Down by the sea, down by the sea,
The morrow shall find me—if morrow there be;
I 'll stay there awhile,
And live in her smile;
Enjoy the piazza, the surf, and the plash;
The tennis; the golf; oh, I'll cut quite a dash!
And be happy—so happy!— Then, quite out of cash,
Come back from the shore
To the dusty old store,
And see her no more—
Heigh-ho!

MAMA'S "DAYS" AT HOME.

Now, Bessie, you 're my dearest friend,
My very best, you know;
Our Thursdays without you, dear,
Would be just dull and slow.
So, darling, please be sure to come;
We 'll both "receive" in style;
Mama is bored, and as for me,
It hardly seems worth while,
Since everybody knows quite well
That I am "caught" at last,
A willing and a happy bird,
By Jack's dear hand held fast.

Who came last week? Well, let me see:
Oh, it was grand! The air

Was keen and bright, alive with light
And gladness everywhere.
At three o'clock in walked my boy —
Dear Jack, you know; and, Bess,
How perfectly absurd he was,
And nice, you 'd never guess.
Then others came: a stupid lot,
Just fops, some eight or nine;
And then a crowd of silly girls.—
But Jack, he stayed to dine.
Well, Bess, such grand times as we had,
With whispering and chaffing!
No one was there but mama's friends;
I thought we 'd die with laughing.
When Jack was gone, two dismal bores
Named Jones came in; and then
I almost yawned: you never saw
Such dreary, gawky men!

But when the clock struck half-past eight,
Who should come in but Jack?
'T was perfectly ridiculous,

And looked quite queer, alack!
'T was such relief to hear his voice
And see his noble form!
(If Jack should go upon the stage
He 'd take the world by storm!)
He stayed an hour, and all the while
They came by strings and strings,
And wished me, oh, so many "joys,"
The kindly, tiresome things!
And so it went — a glorious day
Last Thursday was; and then —
Well, you must know that foolish Jack
Came back *again* — at ten!
And until midnight we two sat
And talked and laughed together,
While poor mama saw all the rest,
And talked about the weather.

'T was splendid, dear. And now, my love,
You can't know how I 'll grieve
If you don't come to us next week,
And help me to receive.

"A dismal prospect," do you say?
Now how can that be true?
Jack is no snob, and really, dear,
He 's very fond of you.

OF ALL THE YEAR.

Nora and I in the sunlight basked
When the woods were in crimson drest.
"Of all the times of the year," she asked,
"Which is the gladdest?
Which is the saddest?
And which do you love the best?"

I looked in her face with a yearning pain
While I answered, as half in jest,
"Of all the seasons, in shine or rain,
This is the saddest,
This is the gladdest,
And this do I love the best."

"Stupid!" she cried in her laughing voice:
"Of spring, summer, winter, or fall,
There surely is more than a single choice;

To me, one is saddest,
Another is gladdest,
And one is the dearest of all."

Still I declared that, ask when she would,
Though 't were winter or spring or the rest,
With her by my side, but one answer seemed good:
That would be gladdest,
That would be saddest,
That season sweetest and best.

"Why, what could it have to be saddest about?"
She asked, with a smile at it all.
So I told her at once of my pain and doubt,
And lo! both our secrets came creeping out
In the glory and shade of the fall.
And nevermore saddest,
But holiest, gladdest,
We found the best season of all!

AT THE PICTURE-GALLERY.

We went to see the pictures, Tom and I,
Because, in truth, we both are fond of art;
And then, besides — well, I will tell you why:
We wished to learn each painter's style by heart.

We lingered all the afternoon, we two —
It was so pleasant in the softened light.
Around and round we went, each gem to view,
And often almost knelt, for better sight.

Judging by haltings, and long, eager looks,
By rustling converse with our guide and friend,
The catalogue had seemed the book of books,
And life a stretch of paintings to the end.

Picture by picture, page by page, we went,
Dubbed this one "perfect" and that other "poor."
You never saw two critics so intent;
I don't know what folks thought of us, I 'm sure.

Yet, do you know, some things drive others out:
If you had asked me ere another day
About the pictures on those walls, I doubt
If I had known a single word to say.

In fact, that evening, in our homeward walk,
We settled much concerning Tom and me;
And not one word was said, in all our talk,
Of pictures or of painters — don't you see?

"THIS WICKED WORLD."

One winter's day, some years ago,
I came to dwell on earth;
The parish clerk, in legal form,
He registered my birth.

No pauper I. Ten lovely toes
Were mine to have and hold;
And also two as rosy fists
As e'er made baby bold.

I thrived in dreams of catnip tea,
And lullaby and rattle;
And varied all the waking hours
With "*gug-gal-loo*" for prattle.

Then came the first grand balance act,
And then the feat of walking;
Then "mam-mam," "pap-pa-pa," and then
The miracle of talking.

So far, so good. I 'd tasted joys,
And arrow-root, and sweets;
And found the world, upon the whole,
A realm of jolly treats.

But next there rose an alphabet
To vex and plague its betters;
'T was now as plain as A, B, C,
This was a world of letters.

Henceforth life's troubles came and went
Like troops of busy weasels:
Now 't was a world of whooping-cough,
And now a world of measles.

Then "two times two" and "four and six,"
Conspired to vex my slumbers,
And prove, since figures never lie,
This sphere a world of numbers.

So boyhood sped. I learned the power
That early pluck discloses;

And, for a while, this life stood forth
A world of battered noses.

Next "Lalla Rookh" and "Rasselas,"
And thoughts that burned on paper;
Hazing; and foot-ball; and "exams;"
The student's midnight taper.

Then came a glance, a dash of pink,
A voice than music sweeter,
A lovely form — "Good world!" I cried,
"There ne'er was aught completer!"

There ne'er was aught so sweet as love —
That gift of wondrous leaven;
It raised the world to Paradise —
Nay, earth itself was heaven!

"Married and settled," so men said.
The busy years still flew.
This was a world of marketing,
Yet a world of comfort, too.

Money was needed — little shoes,
And little hats and frocks,
And household goods — and so it grew
To be a world of stocks.

A world of stocks one hour, and next
A world of blessed pleasure —
The home world and the outer world
Divided dross and treasure.

But all the while a gladsome pulse
Within my heart was leaping,
Because the Father overhead
His watch and ward was keeping.

Trouble and joy, and care and pain,
They filled the measure duly;
Yet that the Lord of all was good
I knew and felt it truly.

If now and then some injury
Was dealt me by my fellow,

I tried to think the bruisèd heart
Was only getting mellow.

. . . . .

Well, wife and I, still hand in hand,
Are trudging on together;
We find the world more gold than gilt,
More worth than fuss-and-feather.

"This wicked world," forsooth? — Why, that 's
What puzzles me: to find it
Called wholly wicked, when we know
There 's so much good behind it.

If folks would let the world go by,
And just stick close to duty,
Taking life's blessings as they come,
And drinking in earth's beauty,

It seems to me the flag of cant
Would in a trice be furled,
And only wicked lips would call
God's world a wicked world.

How did it happen? Well, you see,
Charley called for Mary *or* me;
Sleighing good, and neither loth—
Only wished he could take us both,
So he said. And grandmother smiled,
Nodding at *me:* "Dress warmly, child."
He looked at Moll
As if to say,
"Too bad, but we
Shall ride some day,"
While I, half prompted not to go,
Yet feeling, somehow, forced, you know,
Ran to get ready, blithely humming,
Never dreaming of what was coming.

A dear little sleigh and robes—so nice!
And though the air was cold as ice,

I did n't care one bit—not I.
And that horse of Charley's seemed to fly;
While the sleigh-bells' *ching-a-ling*, clear and sweet,
Kept tune to my heart's bewildered beat,
With their ching-a-ling-ing,
And Charley singing
"What would you do, love?"
Through their ringing.
Everything was so perfect and bright
And sweet and warm—for a winter night—
That—that—in fact, though only sleighing,
I hardly knew what Charley was saying.

Snow-bound? Ah, that is only his joke;
There was n't a storm, and nothing broke,
And we were n't half dead with cold and fear,
Nor buried in drift, as he 'd have it appear.

It 's only his way of letting you know
Of what befell o'er the crispy snow,
While *ching-a-ling-ching*
We slid along,

And Charley forgot
To end his song,
And I—well, I was quiet, too,
For where was the use, when Charley knew?
All in a breath the past grew clear,
And life shone forth so dear, so dear!

"Drifts," indeed! and "Pity we went!"
You might have guessed what his "snow-bound"
meant.

THE DIFFERENCE.

I.

YESTERDAY, the wind it moaned,
The sleet drove fast, the forest groaned,
Yet within all was bright—
My heart, it was light;
The birds were all flinging
Their wealth to my singing;
The glad summer sky
It shone in his eye—
For Robin was here,
Robin, my dear!
Ah, little cared I for the gloom of the weather,
So Robin and I could but whisper together.

II.

To-day, I coldly scan it o'er,
This flood of sun on the silent floor,
As it glitters and trembles,
And vainly dissembles.
The warblings outside,
They mock and deride;
And the sky looks me through
With its cold eye of blue;
For Robin is gone—
Robin, my own!
Ah, what does it matter how sparkling the weather,
If Robin and I cannot ramble together?

A PROPOSAL BY A MAN OF BUSINESS.

My dear Miss B.: Replying to
  Your favor of this date,
Would say, I 'm doing well this year,
  And here beg leave to state

That since rents now are going down
  And wedding-fêtes decline,
St. Valentine hath tempted me
  To ask you to be mine.

I 've thought this step most squarely out,
  And counseled with a friend,
And so I offer you my hand
  To hold till life shall end.

I do not prate of dews and flowers
  Or balmy zephyrs sweet,
But here I bring an honest life
  And lay it at your feet.

Would add, meanwhile, though I admire
  And love you as you are,
As Mrs. Jones, my own true wife,
  You 'd be more dear by far.

Then, Emma, shall it be in vain
  My heart goes pit-a-pat?
Oh, think what joy 't would be for you
  And self to take a flat!

Or shall it be a corner house,
  Where you can watch and see
Your husband coming up the street—
  Yes, coming *home* to tea!

Ah! since this thought occurred to me
  I have not even dozed;

So kindly answer soon — for which
You 'll find a stamp inclosed.

P. S.

Since writing the above, I find
That note was *not* from you!
But still I feel myself inclined
To see this matter through:
So, Emma, pray do not postpone,
But settle it, please do, by 'phone.

As per my letter-head you 'll see
My number is 4-1-6-3.

MISS FLIP AT THE EXPOSITION.

Oh, Miss Flip of New York City lately went to see the show
That was held in gay St. Louis, this season, as you know;
And the things that damsel saw and heard, the things she learned and felt,
Would fill an anchorite with joy, or heart of Nero melt.
I heard her tell her dearest friend about it all one day,
And I beg to give the story in her own sweet girlish way.

"I saw, oh, Florence, lots of things! The trip was, oh, so fine!—
I wore my écru suit, my dear, with white-embroidered vine.

The loveliest machinery—so grand, you know; and then
'T was fun to see them working it — those earnest, dirty men.
My cavalier went wild with rage because I watched them so:
These nobby fellows always are so jealous, dear, you know.
The fine-art gallery, they say, is nice as it can be;
But, really, there was such a crowd, I didn 't try to see.
In the Japanese department I bought me such a fan! —
I wonder how they ever learned to make things in Japan.
And, oh! the way I rushed around, on foot, dear, and in chairs,
Was fearful, for in such a place 'most everybody stares.
I didn 't mind, because it 's only every hundred years
Centennials come, and no one cares how just one girl appears
(So uncle said). But one can't help one's feelings, after all,
When your feathers get so limpsy and your sleeves look crushed and small.

But it really is, when all is done, a satisfaction, dear,
To have seen the Exposition, and not seem green and queer.
And then, the silks and flowers, and summer things — oh, my!
They make you wild, because, you see, you always want to buy.
To see them does expand the mind, and give you new ideas:
I 'm going to copy me a dress that 's shown by Madame Speers;
I 'm going to get a new hat, too, made just like one I saw —
A perfect darling! — just a mass of roses, tulle, and straw!
I saw a real live Turk one day (but didn 't like to look),
All dressed in big red bloomers, like a picture in a book.
You need n't go abroad this year, for all the world is there;
And, really, I do feel as if I 'd been 'most everywhere.
There 's everything on earth to see — *such* jewelry and lace!

And all the buildings lit at night! It 's just the sweetest place!
We strolled into the restaurants, and had a heavenly time
With Mr. F—— and Harry B——, who really turned out prime.
Such lovely cream! although they charge outrageously, they say —
Which doesn't matter much to girls, as *we* don't have to pay.
You see the Alps and tropics, too, and every famous spot,
And I went all through "Creation" — though I 'd really rather not.
But oh, how fine the lagoons are! — they 're all shown in the book —
And the buildings are just splendid, though you have n't time to look.
And, do you know, it's not three years since work out there began!
Don't engineers and builders prove how wonderful is man?

Oh, the palaces and places where there was *so* much to learn!

But, as for that, I passed them all with perfect unconcern —

Because we girls of nowadays — well, you know how we do:

We learn so much we really feel as if we ought n't to.

Papa says it 's the greatest show the world has ever seen,

And he 's glad that we went early while the buildings were so clean.

But poor papa! the bills! the bills! Why, darling, as I live,

Your money just evaporates! — like water through a sieve.

Lord Darnkie made a splendid joke, one day, about the show;

He said — he said — well, I forget just what he said, you know.

But, really, he *is* droll at times — his views are, oh, so queer!

Once, when I asked him if he sang, he drawled: "I have no ee-ah!"

And Harry said a silly thing—he may have meant it, too!
He said: "You think those bracelets dear? they can't
be dear as you!"
These witty men are always saying clever things to
girls.
But when I think of all *I* said, my brain it really whirls.
And oh, those queer, outlandish sights you do see on
the Pike,
Where all the people seem to do exactly as they like!
I walked and turned and twisted until I thought I 'd
drop!
But now I 've talked you almost deaf, and it is time to
stop.
Oh, mercy on us! I *must* go. But I 'm glad I' ve seen
the show,
And told you all about it, and the things you ought to
know."

A QUANDARY.

Tell my lady she is fair?
That no news is, truly.
Tell her she is sweet and rare?
Pure and lovely past compare?
Will it strike her newly?

No; some other way to woo
Must be mine to win her.
What tho' I am fond and true?
All the world adores her, too —
Such a spell is in her.

Ah, I have 't! I 'll stay away,
Though I wander sadly.
Then, to say her gentle "nay,"
She must send for me some day.
And I 'll go right gladly.

LIFE IN LACONICS.

GIVEN a roof, and a taste for rations,
And you have the key to the "wealth of nations."

GIVEN a boy, a tree, and a hatchet,
And virtue strives in vain to match it.

GIVEN a pair, a snake, and an apple,
You make the whole world need a chapel.

GIVEN "no cards," broad views, and a hovel,
You have a realistic novel.

GIVEN symptoms and doctors with potion and pill,
And your heirs will ere long be contesting your will.

THAT good leads to evil there 's no denying:
If it were not for *truth* there would be no *lying*.

"I 'M nobody!" should have a hearse;
But then, "I 'm somebody!" is worse.

"FOLKS say," etcetera! Well, they should n't,
And if they knew you well, they would n't.

WHEN you coddle your life, all its vigor and grace
Shrink away with the whisper: "We 're in the
wrong place."

"A MISS is as good as a mile," they say.
But *I* walked two miles and she gave me "nay."
And the hateful puzzle about all this is,
Two miles did n't turn *that* Miss into Mrs.

GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET.

"One to the fields, the other to the hearth."
LEIGH HUNT.

VERSES OF THE FIELDS

THE GRASS-WORLD.

Oh, life is rife in the heart of the year,
When midsummer suns sail high;
And under the shadow of spike and spear,
In the depth of the daisy sky,
There 's a life unknown to the careless glance;
And under the stillness an airy prance,
And slender, jointed things astir,
And gossamer wings in a sunny whir,—
And a world of work and dance.

Soft in its throbbing, the conscious green
Demurely answers the breeze;
While down in its tangle, in riotous sheen,
The hoppers are bending their knees;

And only a beetle, or lumbering ant,
As he pushes a feathery spray aslant,—
Or the sudden dip of a foraging bird,
With its vibrant trail of the clover stirred,
Discovers the secret haunt.

Ah, the grass-world dies in the autumn days,
When, studded with sheaf and stack,
The fields lie browning in sullen haze,
And creak in the farmer's track.
Hushed is the tumult the daisies knew,
The hidden sport of the supple crew;
And lonely and dazed in the glare of day,
The stiff-kneed hoppers refuse to play
In the stubble that mocks the blue.
For all things feel that the time is drear
When life runs low in the heart of the year.

CONFIDENCES.

I WATCHED a butterfly on the wing;
I saw him alight on a sunny spray.
His pinions quivered;
The blossom shivered;
I know he whispered some startling thing.
But why so bold,
Or what he told,
While poising there on the sunny spray,
I never have learned to this blessèd day.

I watched a brave young cavalier;
I saw him steal to a maiden gay.
Swift words he muttered;
The maiden fluttered;
I know his whisper she flushed to hear.
But why so bold,
Or what he told,
While bending there by the maiden gay,
She never has owned to this blessèd day.

HUBER.

A BLIND man under the linden trees,
Listening hour by hour.
The tall, white clover is tapping his knees—
Impatient, eager flower!
"See! See!
He comes. My bee!
Good friend, you know who is come to me!"—
And now the blind man sees.

He sees!
Oh, wonderful eyes of the sense and soul,
Eyes that, seeing the least so well,
Must see the whole!
And, bees,—
With your booms and buzzings that daze the air,
Your droning cadence with mystic swell,
Your pilot flights and reckonings rare,
And the hoards you drew
From bloom and dew,—

Do you know of the hoard you have stored for
him
Who works and waits in the darkness dim?
From fields where our easy vision fails
In the light where our sunniest sunlight pales,
You carry your store
Of Nature's lore.
Your lives and secrets his soul doth scan,
Giving him glimpse of the Infinite Plan.
Wonderful, wonderful bees,—
For Huber sees!

FIRE-FLIES.

See the air filling near by and afar,—
A shadowy host—how brilliant they are!

Silently flitting, spark upon spark,
Gemming the willows out in the dark;

Waking the night in a twinkling surprise,
Making the star-light pale where they rise;

Snowing soft fire-flakes into the grass,
Lighting the face of each daisy they pass;

Startling the darkness, over and over,
Where the sly pimpernel kisses the clover;

Piercing the duskiest heights of the pines;
Drowsily poised on the low-swinging vines;

Suddenly shifting their tapers around,
Now on the fences, and now on the ground,

Now in the bushes and tree-tops, and then
Pitching them far into darkness again;

There like a shooting-star, slowly on wing,
Here like the flash of a dowager's ring;

Setting the dark, croaking hollows a-gleam,
Spangling the gloom of the ghoul-haunted stream;

They pulse and they sparkle in shadowy play,
Like a night fallen down with its stars all astray;

They pulse and they flicker, they kindle afar,
A vanishing host,—but how brilliant they are!

THE UMPIRES.

I.

We chose our blossoms, sitting on the grass;
His, Marguerites, with sunny, winsome faces,
Mine the bright clover, with its statelier graces.
"Let these decide the argument, my lass;
We 'll watch," said he, "the light-winged breezes pass
And note which first the earliest whiff displaces;
If it be daisy, yours the sore disgrace is,
And be it clover, then I yield, alas!"

The lightsome quarrel was but half in jest;
I would go homeward; he would sit and rest—
The foolish cousin whom I would not wed.
Smiling we waited; not a word we said.
In earnest he, and I quite debonair—
But oh, the stillness of that summer air!

II.

So still it was—so still with quiet heat,
The blossom lately from the brooklet quaffing
Ceased its brisk dipping and sly telegraphing,
And scorned the blossom opposite to greet.
The very grass stood breathless at our feet;
When, suddenly, our weighty silence chaffing,
The leaves around broke out in muffled laughing,
And something stirred the fickle Marguerite!

"Your flower!" I cried.—"Ah, now it bends quite over!"
"Oho!" he answered—"see your nodding clover!"
In truth, those silly blossoms fluttered so,
I really knew not if to stay or go.—
And so it happened that the twilight found me
Still resting there,—and Charlie's arm around me.

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS.

What 's this I hear,
My Molly dear,
About the new carnivora?
Can little plants
Eat bugs and ants
And gnats and flies? —
Why, bless my eyes!
Who is the great diskiverer?

Not Darwin, love,
For that would prove
Unmeet for his parading;
Surely the fare
Of flowers is air,
Or sunshine sweet; —
They should n't eat
Or do aught so degrading.

If it, alas!
Should come to pass
That Fido here should die, — oh, let
It not be said:
"The dog is dead,
Because one day
In thoughtless play
He went too near a violet."

Oh, horror! What
If, heeding not,
Some cruel plant carnivorous
We ventured near —
Yes, *we*, my dear —
And slaughtered were,
With no one there
To succor or deliver us!

And yet, to die
By blossoms, I
Would call a doom ecstatic.
For one might wait

A harder fate
Than have a rose
End all his woes
In pain so aromatic!

Let Science blame
Each flower by name,
And all its wicked habits.
'T is not for us
To make a fuss;
For aught we know,
The lilies grow
From dining on "Welsh rabbits"!

But this I 'll say:
If you, one day,
Should have some fierce bud growing,
For my sake, dear,
Let placards near
Say, by your bower:
"*Beware the flower!*"
Lest I should come, unknowing.

WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS.

Two little sorrel blossoms, pale and slender,
  Lean to each other in the cool, tall grass;
The crowding spears with gallant air and tender,
Shield them completely from the sun's fierce splendor,
  Till harmlessly an angry wind might pass.
And I stand smiling with a sudden whim:
  "The little innocents! Now am I sure
    They think them in a forest grand and dim,
    The mighty grass coeval with their birth,—
Shut from the world, from every ill secure,
  And where their thicket ends, there ends the earth!"

A TALE OF THANKS.

Dear rose! that tinted my baby's cheek,
I praise thee more than words can speak;
And gentian! darling of autumn skies,
I thank thee for her soft blue eyes;
Oh, summer brook! from thy ripples bright
Her smiles do borrow their dancing light;
And satin cell of the chestnut burr,
What lustre of hair thou hast lent to her!
Oh, lithe young sapling, growing apace,
Honor to thee for her supple grace;
And living sunshine, well I know
Thou gavest her warm young heart its glow.
In truth, not a charm of earth or sky
But comes for my girl to pattern by;
And truly I thank you, every one,
For the sweetest lassie the sun shines on!

READING.

One day in the bloom of a violet
I found a simple word;
And my heart went softly humming it,
Till the violet must have heard.

And deep in the depth of a crimson rose
A writing showed so plain,
I scanned it over in veriest joy
To the patter of summer rain.

And then from the grateful mignonette
I read—ah, such a thing!
That the glad tears fell on it like dew,
And my soul was ready to sing.

A few little words! Before that day
I never had taken heed;
But, oh, how I blessed the love that came—
The love that taught me to read!

"NOW THE NOISY WINDS ARE STILL."

Now the noisy winds are still;
April 's coming up the hill!
All the spring is in her train,
Led by shining ranks of rain;
  Pit, pat, patter, clatter,
  Sudden sun, and clatter, patter!—
First the blue, and then the shower;
Bursting bud, and smiling flower;
Brooks set free with tinkling ring;
Birds too full of song to sing;
Crisp old leaves astir with pride,
Where the timid violets hide,—
All things ready with a will,—
April 's coming up the hill!

FULFILLMENT.

Waking in May, the peach-tree thought:
"Idle and bare and weaving naught!
Here have I slept the winter through—
I with my Master's work to do!"

Started the buds. The blossoms came,
Till all the branches were a-flame.
She rocked the birds, and wove the green,
A busy tree as ever was seen.

Busy and blithe, she drank the dew;
She caught the sunbeams gliding through;
She drew her wealth from sky and soil,
And rustled gayly in her toil.

Now see the peach-tree's drooping head,
With all her fruit a-blushing red!
Knowing her Master's work is done,
She meekly resteth in the sun.

TWO SUMMER DAYS.

"JUNE 17TH.

"*It was only a little bunch of clover-blossoms gathered for her, near a way-side station, soon after our parties were introduced on the East-bound train. But how much it meant! That was just one year ago to-day,—and now we are going back together!*"—FROM HIS LETTER.

A YEAR ago this day, my girl,
The clover told a thing to you,
Amid the stir and noisy whirl
Of wheels, as toward his home we flew;
And now you know how fond and true
The thing the clover said to you.

With modest mirth and girlish grace,
You took the gift and lightly smiled;
You pressed it softly to your face,
(What wonder that the flower grew wild!)
And now, in thought, again we trace,
The clover bloom, the girlish grace.

Over the self-same road again
  You journey,—yours the homeward way;
And bright upon that Western plain
  The nodding clover smiles to-day;
And still, though not in lightsome play,
It has a blessed thing to say.

Still waves the clover in the sun,
  And whispers near the whirring track:
"Two lives are floating into one,
  Two travellers are speeding back.
God bless them both till Heaven is won,
And bless the love in bloom begun!"

A GROUP OF BIRTHDAY VERSES

WRITTEN ON THE ROAD.

Out in the sunshine fair and free,
Flecked by the blossoming, re-born tree,
Bathed in the pale, pure light of Spring,
While men look up, and the glad birds sing,—
There, dear friend, let thy reck'ning be,
So let thy birthdays come to thee!

Firm as the tall, brave trunks around;
Full of life as the flower-full ground;
Free as the boughs that sweep the blue;
Bright as the violet's sudden hue;—
So let thy life-long reck'ning be,
So let thy birthdays come to thee!

It was cool and gray in the twilight morn—
A prophecy sweetest—when thou wast born;
And if daylight gathered a cloud or two
That floated beside thee when life was new,

Thy noon will be sunny and clear, I know,
And holy and peaceful thine evening glow:
For good and true shall thy reck'ning be
Till all thy birthdays are come to thee.

MILE-STONES.

MILE-STONES fair on the road of life,
  Thy birthdays bright appear —
  One by one, erect and clear,
Triumphant, and with meaning rife.
Lead on, O birthdays of my friend,
  With joy and peace between!
And be ye guides and monuments
  Of all that he hath been,
And all he is, and yet shall be
Through time and blest eternity!

10

"EVERY DAY A BIRTHDAY IS."

Every day a birthday is,
Into an unknown world:

Life, with its changes infinite,
  Keepeth its counsel well;
The gain, the good, the sin in it
  Only each day may tell.
Between the dawns comes man's first breath;
Between the dawns, man's hour of death.

Yet, by the twelvemonth do we keep
The record of our stay:

So, when, no longer desolate,
  Forests grow green and sweet,
And nature in her fair estate
  Flings blossoms at thy feet,
We hail thee, richer by a year,—
We hail thee, comrade tried and dear!

Wishing is giving — soul to soul.
What shall I wish this day?

I wish thee peace and happiness,
And work and honored meed;
I wish thy sorrows tardiness,
And every joy God-speed!
I wish thee all I may, dear friend;
God's grace; and manhood to the end!

ONE DAY IN MAY.

It passed us by — I know not why —
Without a sign or token;
Another year in gliding by
No parting word had spoken!

It went its way one day in May
When Time was softly speeding:

A brave, fresh year before thee lay,
And there I sat, unheeding!

Then she, the good, in tender mood
Spoke of the years' swift gliding,
And I — the laggard! — understood
The thing thou hadst been hiding.

By twilight's glow, sweet flowers we brought
And gave thee happy greeting;
In cheery, home-lit ways we sought
To mark the day's completing.

Thus, one by one, they westward run —
Thy years; and so we find them
A proud surprise, at set of sun, —
A trail of flowers behind them.

TO A YOUNG GIRL.

WITH A SPRAY OF AUTUMN LEAVES.

THOUGH Autumn winds be sighing in your future, Molly dear,
Their music may be sweeter than the early Spring-time cheer;
As the fleeting moments ripen in the fullness of your prime,
There 'll be tints and shadows richer far than those of Summer-time;
And so, these leaves prophetic made me dream, my girl, of you,
As they trembled in their gladness, with the sunlight shining through.

MARCH.

Ho! warrior month, my Martius, hail!
With battling breeze and clarion call
Thou rushest over hill and vale.
Before thee kneels the glowing year;
Behind, thy glittering hosts appear.
To rescue earth from icy thrall
Thou comest, bravest month of all!

Dear, bustling March, my *Frühling* come!
First month to-day, as first of old.
Thine the fresh song and wakened hum;
Thine the glad rill's recovered flow,
And thine the stir the sod below.
Thy rap and tap and summons bold
Startle the earth from slumber's hold.

O month content! My heart to thee!
No clamor now, no sudden throe—
The earth is roused; her soul is free;
How calm art thou, thy victory won,
How restful, in the restful sun!

The maiden April cometh slow,
Thou 'lt greet her like a king, and go.

SECRETS.

I 'd like to be a daisy
In the clover,
That I might look up bravely
At my lover.

I 'd bid the willing breezes
Bend me sweet,
That I might, as he passed me,
Touch his feet;

I 'd let the dew so quickly
Start and glisten,
That, thinking I had called him,
He would listen.

Yet would he listen vainly—
Happy me!
No bee could find my secret;
How could he?

If ever of the clover
Couch he made,
I 'd softly kiss his eyelids
In the shade.

Then would I breathe sweet incense
All for him,
And fill with perfect bloom
The twilight dim.

What should I do, I wonder,
When he went?
Why, I would—like a daisy—
Be content.

Alack! to live so bravely,
Peace o'erladen,
Has ne'er been granted yet
To simple maiden.

AT THE WINDOW.

I SIT at the window and watch her,
With my work before me spread,
My needle flashing and foiling the light;
She trimmeth her garden-bed.

No word do I speak to the maiden
As she trips the garden round;
Yet questions go and answers come,
Though not on the wings of sound.

"Look deep in the rose, my Eunice,
And tell me what you find."
"I find a love that is sweet and warm
Glowing for all mankind."

"Now turn to the breeze, my Eunice,
And say what doth it bear."
"It bears in the touch of its fragrant flight
A promise of heavenly care."

"Oh, list to the birds, sweet Eunice,
And tell me what you hear!"
"I hear a shower of blessings fall
On all things far and near."

No word do I speak to the maiden,
As she trips the garden round;
Yet the questions go and the answers come
Though not on the wings of sound.

For I know in the soul of my darling,
Lighting her gladsome youth,
Abideth a love for the Father above
Deep as her sweetness and truth.

I sit at the window and watch her,
Till the quick tears gather and fall;
Then quietly turn to my sewing again,
And wonder with joy at it all.

UNISON

Over us the wild, cool Night
Spread her dark tresses heavy with quick gems,
Till in the twinkling blackness, lithe and light,
We felt like wood-flowers swung on hidden stems.

A WELCOME.

The great, slow sea and the wide, wide sky,
With never a fleck on the blue or the sea;
The quick, glad rush of the wave to the shore—
So may our love and our meetings be.

TO A FRIEND.

I ROAMED with thee the mountain-side,
And, with thee, watched the shadows fall;
The sun went down, but night flung wide
A glory mightier than all.

And we have walked the fields, we twain,
And said: "How fair the distance shows!
How far they blend — the sky and plain!
How holy-bright the twilight glows!"

And, hill or plain, thy soul was high,—
High as the peaks that lift to God;
And not more true than thee the sky
That shone, as on our way we trod.

THE FLOWERS.

THEY 'RE coming! they 're coming!
'T is writ on the air,
In incense and harmony
Breathed everywhere!
Winds murmur no longer
Their woe to the pines—
But spiders are spinning
Their gossamer lines.
Blue-birds are darting
The branches among,
Wild with a pleasure
Only half sung.
Willows are greening
Down by the brook;
Insects are stirring
In forest and nook;

Sunlight is bringing
  Buttercups sweet—
Hear the grass whisper
  Under our feet!
Telling of daisies,
  Telling of clover,
Telling of beauty
  All the world over.

They 're coming! They 're coming!
  The beautiful throng,
To soothe us and cheer us
  The whole summer long.
By brook, and in meadow,
  Woodland and glade,
Through moonlight and star-light
  Sunshine and shade,
They 're creeping, they 're springing,
  They 're climbing the hill,
They 're twining and clinging—
  Though underground still;

The blue-birds have called them,—
The roses and all;
They have heard, and already
They answer the call!

O Snow-white and Purple,
Pink, Yellow and Blue!
Lie close to their hearts
Till the day they come through
O Spirit of Beauty!
Spirit of Grace!
Still bide ye above them
Watching the place.
Fragrance and loveliness
Still hover near,
Soon shall your hosts
In their glory appear.
Surely the Spring-time
Is crowning its hours—
They 're coming! They 're coming—
The beautiful flowers!

A SONG OF MAY.

My heart is light with May, with May,
  My heart is light with May!
The sky is soft; the coming birds
  Are silent on their way.

The miracle of flower and fruit
  Not yet the Lord hath wrought;
But never ripened Summer-time
  So bright a day hath brought.

For there is promise in the air,
  And murmurous prophecy;
All breathless and with lifted arms,
  Stand waiting shrub and tree.

To-morrow shall the blossoms glow;
  At dawn the birds will sing;

All through the stillness deep I hear
The rushing tide of Spring.

My heart is light with May, with May,
My heart is light with May!
And all the more that coming birds
Are silent on their way.

BLOSSOM-SNOW.

March came one morn to the door of May,
And begged the maiden to let him stay.
"I went too soon," was his whining prayer,
"I knew not the earth could grow so fair."
So she let him in; and he promised her
He would hardly breathe and never stir.

And all day long he kept his word;
Naught from the sly old guest was heard.
Now and then he would breathe a sigh
And startle the blue-birds passing by;
Or hidden violets uncover,
Or try to blow some daisy over;
Yet, for the rest, he kept his word,—
He hardly breathed, and he never stirred,
Till the sweet May murmured: "Now, my dear,
We really do not need you here,
My flowers are frightened—don't you see?
They 'd rather be alone with me."

High overhead the blossoms hung;
Full gently had the tree-tops swung.
But now he rose in sudden wrath
And whitened all the sunny path.
"Oho!" cried he, "if I must go
I 'll turn her blossoms into snow!"

Clinging and warm, they felt the spell.
Ah, how they fluttered, floated, fell!
The air was full of eddying bloom,—
A lightsome, flowery dance of doom.
In flurried heaps at last it lay,
Or drifted silently away;
And still he shook, "Good-bye! Good-bye!"
Then vanished in the trackless sky.

The branches whispered: "Now for fruit!"
And thrilled with joy from tip to root.
May, kneeling, kissed the fragrant ground;
The air was filled with peace profound;
For all things smiled, and seemed to know
The promise of the blossom-snow.

GREETINGS.

"Good day!" cried one who drove to West,
"Good day!" the other, Eastward bound;—
Strong, hearty voices both, that rang
Above their wagons' rattling sound.
And I, within my snug home nest,
"Good day! good day!" still softly sang.
I saw them not, yet well I knew
How much a cheery word can do,
How braced those hearts that on their way
Speed, each to each, a brave "Good day!"

VERSES OF THE HEARTH

THE CONCERT.

Such a concert, dear, as I 've had to-night!
Full of sweet sound and deep delight;
And yet "the house" was poor;
Poor, if you count by crowded seats;
But judging only by glad heart-beats,
'T was a splendid house, I 'm sure.

First, Baby sang as well as she could
Some sweet little notes that I understood;
And wee Kate's chirp of a laugh broke out
As Willy ran in with a merry shout;
The pussy purred on the rug in state,
And the good clock ticked: "It 's late! it 's late!"
While faint in the shadows the cricket sang,
And the kettle hummed with a plaintive twang.

That was Part First, you must know, my dear,
When only we five were there to hear;
The fagots crackled applause;

The baby's soft little pat-a-cake
Made reckless *encores* for the music's sake,
And "lullaby" brought us the pause.

Well, the Second Part? Ah that was fine—
Fine to the heart's core, lover mine!
For over the kettle's winsome plaint,
And the baby's breathing, sweet and faint,
And over the prattle of Will and Kate,
And the clock's impatient "Late! it 's late!"
I heard the blessedest sound of all—
A click of the latch, a step in the hall!
And "Home, sweet home" pulsed all the air
As you came calling up the stair.

ANOTHER YEAR.

Old man with the hour-glass, halt! halt! I pray—
Don't you see you are taking my children away?
My own little babies who came long ago,
You stole them, old man with the beard white as snow!

My beautiful babies, so bonny and bright!
Where have you carried them, far out of sight?
Oh, dimpled their cheeks were, and sunny their hair!
But I cannot find them; I 've searched everywhere.

My three-year-old toddlers, they shouted in glee;
They sported about me; they sat on my knee.
Oh, their prattle and laughter were silvery rain!
Old man, must I list for their voices in vain?

They were here; they were gone while their kisses were warm.
I scarce knew the hour when they slipped from my arm—

Oh! where was I looking when, peerless and sweet,
They followed the track of your echoless feet?

My brave little school-boys who ran in and out,
And lifted the air with their song and their shout:
My boys on the coldest days ever a-glow,
My dear, romping school-boys who bothered me so!

There were two of them then; and one of the two—
Ah! I never was watchful enough—followed you.
My chubby-faced darling, my kite-flying pet—
Alack! all his playthings are lying here yet.

And the other. O Time! do not take him away!
For a few precious years, I implore, let him stay.
I love him—I need him—my blessing and joy!
You have had all the rest; leave me one little boy!

He halts! He will stop! No; the fall of the sand
In the hour-glass deceived me. It seemed at a stand.
But whom have we here? Jamie! Harry! how? why,
Just as many as ever—and Time passing by?

Jamie, my bouncer, my man-boy, my pride!
Harry, my sunbeam, whatever betide—
I can hardly believe it. But surely it 's clear
My babies, my toddlers, my school-boys are here!

Move on then, O Time! I have nothing to say,
You have left me far more than you 've taken away,
And yet I would whisper a word ere you go;
You 've a year of my Harry's—the last one, you know—

How does it rank among those that have flown?
Was it worthily used when he called it his own?
God filled it with happiness, comfort and health—
Did my darling spend rightly its Love-given wealth?

No answer in words. Yet it really did seem
That the sand sparkled lightly—the scythe sent a gleam.
Is it answer and promise? God grant it be so,
From that silent old man with the beard white as snow.

MOTHERLESS.

"I WISH she had not died," she said;
The words were soft and low;
"Most little girls like me, papa,
Have dear mammas, you know.

"There 's Lulu Hart next door. Oh, dear!
I think it is so sweet
To have your mother nod to you
Across the window-seat.

"And often when we 're playing games,
Lu throws a kiss up there;
And when she rolls her hoople well,
She knows some one will care.

"Do you think God was good to take
My own mamma away?
For I was just a baby then—
Papa, why don't you say?"

"Yes, yes, my child," he sobbed. "Mamma
Is very happy, dear."
His little girl sprang up, nor cared
Another word to hear.

"Why, papa, crying! Please don't cry.
Do you feel sorry, too?
Now, papa, see. I never meant
I did n't care for you.

"Poor eyes! all wet. I 'll kiss them dry.
What 's in your pocket? See.
Oh, where 's your watch? Now, wont you please
Just make it tick for me?

"It 's nice to have a dear papa;—
How big it is, and bright!
I hear it *ticky, ticky, tick!*
It 's *very* loud to-night.

"Ride me to Banbury Cross, papa!
Now don't you let me fall.

When I was littler, how I slipped!
I could n't keep on at all.

"Oh, there 's the tea-bell! Now you 've tossed
My hair like everything!
I 'll toss yours, too. Oho! oho!
You look just like a king—

"For kings have crowns, you know, papa,
And your hair 's standing straight.
I knew you 'd laugh. There, now, you 're good—
Come, quick, and show Aunt Kate."

Aunt, at the table, glanced at one,
Then, slyly, at the other;
She could not think what hidden thing
Had happened to her brother.
His shining hair stood like a crown,
His smile was warm and bright,—
"Why, John," she said, "you really seem
Like your old self to-night."

THE FOOT-PRINT IN THE SNOW.

Heavy and white the cold snow lay,
As, nearing my cottage one winter day,
I saw by the porch a foot-print small,
A bare little foot-print, toes and all,
Pressed—ah, so wearily!—into the snow,
As if the wee step had been jaded and slow.
"Poor little homeless waif!" I thought;
But the fleeting sympathy came to naught—
For pity may fall from a heart that 's gay
As lightly as snow-flakes melting away;
And soon would be greeting me, strong in their charms,
Bright little faces and warm little arms.

Closing the door, in a joyous glow,
I chided the children for crowding me so—
The glad little witches! as sunny and blessed
As ever a home-coming mother caressed.
Then I caught up the youngest, unnoticed before,
My sweet little Mabel, who sat on the floor.

"Why, my darling! What is it?" I cried, in surprise;
"Barefooted!" The little one lifted her eyes;
They were brimming with tears, and her cheek, too, was wet—
"Oh, my feet hurt me so!" "What has harmed them, my pet?"
"Why, just to see how it felt, you know,
I stood with my shoes off out there in the snow."

That was all. But while fondling and making them warm—
The dear little feet that had tempted the storm—
And putting on soft little stocking and shoe,
A feeling of sudden remorse pierced me through.
That lingering foot-print! How soon I forgot
When I thought 't was a beggar-child passed by my cot!
O pale-blossomed pity that never bore fruit!—
I will pluck it away from my heart, branch and root.
Love teaches at last. Now their meaning I know—
The bare little foot-prints we see in the snow.

MOTHER GOOSE FOR BIG FOLKS.

Not only the little toddlers,
  Perched high on papa's toe,
Bound for a ride to London town,
  On childish journeys go —
For we all go up, up, up,
  And all go down, down, down-y,
And all go backward and forward,
  And all go round, round, round-y.

Still do we reach for sunbeams,
  And learn the rattle's trick.
The great big watch of Father Time —
  We love to hear it tick!
To pat a cake for our Tommy,
  And pat a cake for one's self —
For that alone we labor and strive,
  And hoard up our golden pelf.

This little pig goes to market;
  This little pig stays at home;
And we all cry "Wee!" for our mammy,
  Wherever we chance to roam.
We seek our bed with Sleepyhead;
  We stay awhile with Slow;
And fill the pot with Greedy, glad
  To sup before we go.

When Jack and Jill go up the hill
  To fetch their pail o' water,
As sure as Jack comes tumbling down
  Poor Jill comes tumbling arter.
Mistress Marys are still contrary;
  Marjorie Daws still sell;
And Mother Hubbards ransack their cupboards
  For bones for the ne'er-do-well.

Jack Horners in their corners still
  Do ply the busy thumb,
And "What a big boy!" we always cry
  Whenever we see the plum.

Our wise men into brambles yet
  Do jump with might and main;
And those who go to sea in bowls
  Rarely come back again.

"What do you want?" "A pot o' beer."
  Alack, the bitter wrong!
That grenadier an army hath
  How many million strong!
And don't some hearts, deploring
  The things that gnaw and harrow,
Let fall the wheelbarrow, wife and all,
  When lanes are rough and narrow?

Ah, yes! the old rhymes suit us
  As well as ever they did;
For the gist of our lives, from first to last,
  Is under their jingle hid —
As we all go up, up, up,
  And all go down, down, down-y,
And all go backward and forward,
  And all go round, roundy, round-y.

THE QUEEN O' MAY.

By Paterfamilias.

The Queen o' May she comes this way,
With all things fresh and green —
By grace of Time a potentate,
Yea, every inch a queen!

She takes her stand, she rules the land;
She rules this house and me;
She rules my wife, my children all,
My very purse rules she.

Make room! make room! Her busy broom
Waves in the baleful air;
A dusting-brush her scepter is,
Her throne is everywhere.

She rubbeth well, she scrubbeth well,
  She scrapes, and pokes, and pries;
O hidden haunts of dust, beware
  The searching of her eyes!

The Queen o' May works by the day;
  Her forces, how they rush!
The household gods bow down and quail
  Before her busy brush.

Where'er you roam through home, sweet home,
  You tread on soap and tacks;
And when you 'd sit, your wounds to nurse,
  The chairs loom up in stacks.

Your boots, your traps, your bonds and maps,
  Your coats, your deeds of trust,
Lie massed with carpets newly raised,
  All smothering in dust.

You moan, "Keep cool!" your soul to school.
  Puss in your beaver lies;

Your razor as a household tool
  Is used before your eyes.

Ah, woman's will is blessed still;
  We 'll let her have her way.
But in heaven's moth-less mansions, sure,
  Things never go astray!
We 'll need no whitewashing up there;
There 'll be no pails upon the stair;
And no such thing as moving-day, —
No, sir, — nor any Queen o' May!

HOME AND MOTHER.

Sleep, my own darling,
By, baby, by;
Mother is with thee,
By, baby, by.
There, baby. (Oh, how the wild winds wail!)
Hush, baby. (Turning to sleet and hail;
Ah, how the pine-tree moans and mutters!—
I wonder if Ellen will think of the shutters?)

Sleep, my own darling,
By, baby, by;
Mother is with thee,
By, baby, by.
Rest thee. (She could n't have left the blower
Down in the parlor? There 's so much to show her!)
By-by, my sweetest. (Now the rain 's pouring!
Is it wind or the dining-room fire that 's roaring?)

Sleep, my own darling,
By, baby, by;
Mother is with thee,
By, baby, by.

How lovely his forehead!—my own blessed pet!
He 's nearly asleep. (Now I must n't forget
That pork in the brine, and the stair-rods to-morrow.)
Heaven shield him forever from trouble and sorrow!

Sleep, my own darling,
By, baby, by;
Mother is with thee,
By, baby, by.

Those dear little ringlets, so silky and bright!
(I do hope the muffins will be nice and light.)
How lovely he is! (Yes, she said she could fry.)
Oh, what would I do if my baby should die!

Sleep, my own darling,
By, baby, by;
Mother is with thee,
By, baby, by.

That sweet little hand, and the soft, dimpled cheek!
Sleep, darling. (I 'll have his clothes shortened this week.
How tightly he 's holding my dress! I 'm afraid
He 'll wake when I move. There! his bed is n't made!)

Sleep, my own darling,
By, baby, by;
In thy soft cradle
Peacefully lie.

(He 's settled at last. But I can't leave him so,
Though I ought to be going this instant, I know.
There 's everything standing and waiting down-stairs.
Ah me, but a mother is cumbered with cares!)

A MONDAY ROMANCE.

Biddy was at the wash-tubs,
Her arms in the lather white;
At the scullery door, with a basket,
The baker, her own true knight.

"Set down the loaves," said Biddy,
In a voice of careless scorn.
"Don't ye mind I am busy a-wringin'?
Bring rolls on the morra morn."

"Ah, Biddy, Biddy, Biddy,
It 's always wringin' ye be!"
Sighed Lanty, moving streetward,
"And the thing ye wring is me."

Then, quick, a thought came o'er him,
And back he stepped to say:

"Is it muffins ye 'll be a-wantin',
Or buns, for the missus' tay?"

Now stands she by the boiler,
Laden with clean wet "clo'es";
Her eyes are bright as the morning,
Her cheeks as red as a rose.

"Och! go yer ways. We 'll be sendin';
I have n't the time to say;
I must mind me bleachin' an' bluin'
Awhile I 've the best o' the day."

She ran to the garden grass-plot,
While he went out to the street:
"It 's *me* ye are bleachin' an' bluin',
Oh, Biddy, so pretty and sweet!"

At noon, in ending his circuit,
He "stopped to see Biddy a minute";
The kitchen was open and sunny,
But "sorra a Biddy was in it."

Soon, eagerly, through the window
Her lithe little form he was spying.
He called. But she answered him coldly:
"It 's hangin' I am, while there 's drying."

"It 's hangin' I 'll be, cruel Biddy!"
He said to himself at the hint.
"For the matter o' that, I am thinkin',
My hangin' would make her contint."

Once more, in the top of the evening,
When supper was well cleared away,
Bold Lanty, in holiday raiment,
Dropped in, and had courage to stay.

On the clothes-line that criss-crossed the kitchen
Hung snowy-white things, chill and damp;
But the coals in the range crackled brightly,
And Biddy had lighted her lamp.

Full thickly the garments were hanging —
Grim collars and things nearly dried,

And, largest of all, near the dresser,
A table-cloth snowy and wide.

"The shower wet me wash afther dinner,
An' I hung 'em within so, to dry.
Och hone! but I wish you was married!"
Said Biddy, pretending to sigh.

"Is it married ye wish I was, Biddy?
Faix, meself do be wishin' that same;
An', in thruth, that I 'm single this minute
It is n't mesel' that 's to blame."

"And who, thin?" asked Biddy, akimbo.
"Go and have her, for all I would care!"
Then stepped out of sight, quite forgetting
The lamp with its tale-telling glare.

Now up starts the gallant young Lanty,
For dark on the cloth he espies,
As it hangs there, the shadow of Biddy,
Her apron held up to her eyes!

"Arrah, Biddy, me darlint, what ails ye?
You're kapin' me single—och hone!
It 's yoursel' can be makin' me married—
Say, will you, dear Biddy Malone?"

Only two empty chairs by the fire,
And two shadow forms on the cloth;
But love is the same the world over,
And Biddy no longer was wroth.

THE ZEALLESS XYLOGRAPHER.

(Dedicated to the End of the Dictionary.)

A Xylographer started to cross the sea
By means of a Xanthic Xebec;
But, alas! he sighed for the Zuyder Zee,
And feared he was in for a wreck.
He tried to smile, but all in vain,
Because of a Zygomatic pain;
And as for singing, his cheeriest tone
Reminded him of a Xylophone—
Or else, when the pain would sharper grow,
His notes were as keen as a Zuffolo.
And so it is likely he did not find
On board Xenodochy to his mind.
The fare was poor, and he was sure
Xerophagy he could not endure;
Zoophagous surely he was, I aver,
This dainty and starving Xylographer.
Xylophagous truly he could not be—
No sickly vegetarian he!

He 'd have blubbered like any old Zeuglodon
Had Xerophthalmia not come on.
And the end of it was he never again
In a Xanthic Xebec went sailing the main.

THE SAD STORY OF LITTLE JANE.

A CALENDAR OF WOE.

JAN—e, little saint, was hard to nurse,
FEB—rifuge she had none;
MAR—malade seemed to make her worse,
APR—icots were all gone.
MAY—be, she thought, on some fair plain,
JUNE—berries sweet may grow;
JULY—'twas late, they searched in vain,
AUG—menting all her woe.
SEPT—imus failed to find a pill —
OCT—oroon slave was he;
NOV—ice, poor thing! at feeling ill,
DEC—eased ere long was she.

MY DOG.

I LOVE my dog—a beautiful dog,
Brave and alert for a race;
Ready to frolic with baby or man;
Dignified, too, in his place.

I like his bark—a resonant bark,
Musical, honest, and deep;
And his swirling tail and his shaggy coat
And his sudden, powerful leap.

Never a smug little pug for me,
Nor a spitz with treacherous snap!
Never a trembling, pattering hound,
Nor a poodle to live on my lap!

No soft-lined basket for bed has Jack,
Nor bib, nor luxurious plate;
But our open door, that he guards so well,
And the lawn are his royal state.

No dainty leading-ribbon of silk
My grand, good dog shall fret;
No golden collar needs he to show
He 's a very expensive pet;

But just my loving voice for a chain,
His bound at my slightest sign,
And the faith when we look in each other's eyes
Proclaim that my dog is mine.

He never was carried in arms like a babe,
Nor dragged like a toy, all a-curl;
For he proudly knows he 's a dog, does Jack, —
And I 'm not that sort of a girl.

KATRINKA.

KATRINKA, fresh as the morning,
Gazed from her casement low;
Far off, the great-sailed windmills
Stood darkly in a row,
And the sky with the changing splendor
Of dawn was all aglow.

"I wonder," thought the maiden,
Thrilled with the glorious sight,
"If all the beauty around us,
And all the love and delight,
Come flooding the earth at sunrise
To bide with us, day and night?

"I wonder if all the goodness
That makes us steady and true
Glides softly in with the dawning
To gladden us through and through—
To lift our hearts to the Giver,
And help us in all we do?

"Yet, whether we lose it or keep it
Depends upon many a thing:
Whether we 're lazy or busy;
Whether we grumble or sing;
Whether our thoughts are noble,
Or whether they grovel and sting.

"Oh, the wonderful sky!" sighed Katrinka,
"How grand! — But the day has begun;
There 's breakfast, and spinning, and mending,
And the kettles to shine — one by one.
Good-by, you dear, beautiful morning!
There 's so much to do; I must run."

Bright little maiden, Katrinka,
In the land of the dike and the sea!
They who live in the glow of the dawning
Are, all the world over, like thee.
Bearers of sunlight and gladness,
Faithful in shadow and sadness —
The path of the day is diviner
Wherever their light may be.

AN APRIL GIRL.

The girl that is born on an April day
Has a right to be merry, lightsome, gay;
And that is the reason I dance and play
And frisk like a mote in a sunny ray.
Would n't you
Do it, too,
If you had been born on an April day?

The girl that is born on an April day
Has a royal right to cry, they say;
And so I sometimes *do* give way
When things get crooked or all astray.
Would n't you
Do it, too,
If you had been born on an April day?

The girls of March love noise and fray;
And sweet as blossoms are girls of May;
But I belong to the time midway —
And so I rejoice in a sunny spray
Of smiles and tears and hap-a-day —
Would n't you
Do it, too,
If you had been born on an April day?

Heigh-ho! and hurrah! for an April day,
Its cloud, its sparkle, its skip and stay!
I mean to be happy whenever I may,
And cry when I must; for that 's my way.
Would n't you
Do it, too,
If you had been born on an April day?

KITTY.

"Come, Kitty, come!" they said,—
But Kitty hesitated;
Nodding oft her pretty head
With, "I 'm coming soon.
Father 's rowing home, I know,
I cannot think what keeps him so,"
And still she stood and waited.—
"I 'm coming soon."

"Come, Kit!" her brothers cried;
But Kitty by the water
Still eagerly the distance eyed,
With, "I 'm coming soon.
Why what would evening be," said she,
"Without dear father home to tea?
Without his 'Ho, my daughter!'—?
I 'm coming soon."

"Come, Kate!" her mother called,
"The supper 's almost ready."
But Kitty in her place installed,
Pleads: "I 'm coming soon.
Do let me wait. He 's sure to come;
By this time father 's always home—
He rows so fast and steady;
I 'm coming soon."

"Come, Kit!" they half implore.
The girl is softly humming;
She hardly hears them any more,—
But "I 'm coming soon"
Is in her heart; for far from shore—
Gliding the happy waters o'er—
She sees the boat, and cries, "He 's coming!
We 're coming soon!"

MY WINDOW-IVY.

Over my window the ivy climbs,
  Its roots are in homely jars;
But all the day it looks at the sun,
  And at night looks out at the stars.

The dust of the room may dim its green,
  But I call to the breezy air:
"Come in, come in, good friend of mine!
  And make my window fair."

So the ivy thrives from morn to morn,
  Its leaves all turned to the light;
And it gladdens my soul with its tender green,
  And teaches me day and night.

What though my lot is in lowly place,
  And my spirit behind the bars;
All the long day I may turn to the sun,
  And at night look out at the stars.

What though the dust of earth would dim,
There 's a glorious outer air
That will sweep through my soul if I let it in,
And make it fresh and fair.

Dear God! let me grow from day to day,
Resolute, sunny, and bright!
Though planted in shade, Thy window is near,
And my leaves may turn to the light.

A BIRTHDAY RHYME.

TELL me, O youth so straight and tall,
So glad with eager thought!
Have you seen of late a bouncing boy
Brimful of merry sport?
Brimful of merry sport is he,
A lad of fifteen summers,
With velvet lip still smooth and fair,
But a fist that awes all comers.

He used to laugh with unconcern
Whene'er a school-girl met him,
Unconscious quite what wondrous power
She 'd have in time to fret him.
He only cared for "fellows" then,
And "ball," and "tag," and "shinny,"
And thought a chap who brushed his hair
Was just a fop or ninny.

Somehow, I loved this bouncing boy
  Because he was my own;
I had him here a year ago,
  And know not where he 's flown.
I know not where he 's flown, and yet
  Whenever you are near—
It 's very odd!—I 'm reconciled
  Because you grow so dear.

You bear great likeness to my boy
  I think, and—strange the whim!—
There 's that in you which I have prayed
  Might come in time to him.
Then if you 'll stay, my dashing youth,
  And love me like the other,
I 'll let him go, and, clasping you,
  Be still a happy mother.

So hold me close, my bigger boy,
  My larger-hearted Harry,
With broader shoulders, older head,
  And more of life to carry;

Hold close, and whisper, heart to heart,
Our Lord has blessed us truly,
Since every year we love so well
And find it out so newly.

With deepened joy and prayerful love,
All in the autumn's splendor,
I hail you, boy of mine, and give
A welcome proud and tender.
'T is grand to take the birthdays in,
If, while the years we 're counting,
In heart and soul, in hope and aim,
We steadily are mounting.

THANKSGIVING.

All their heads were bowed in prayer,—
Father's, mother's, boys' and girls',
Grandma's, grandpa's—only Nelly,
Little Nelly, shook her curls.

Little Nelly shook her curls,
Smiling, gazing, all intent,
Stared, as ever, at the sight—
Wondered what on earth it meant.

Busy fire-light, flashing bright,
Shot its frisky flamelets out;
While the ship above the clock
Gayly tossed and pitched about.

Roasted turkey, on his back,
And the chickens, side by side,
Had a perky, pompous air,
Full of jollity and pride;

Tempting pies and puddings near,
Held their faces to the light;
While canary in his cage,
Piped and sang with all his might.

Flowery carpet under-foot,
Hanging basket all a-bloom,
Pearly, picture-covered wall—
Drew the sunlight to the room.

Little Nelly felt it all,
Felt how bright it was and fair;.
And the moment seemed so long
That the heads were bowed in prayer.

If they only knew, she thought,
How the room was full of play,.
They would never hide their faces
In that sober, solemn way.

Laughing, puzzled little Nell!
How could such a baby know

'T was the cheery, sunny gladness
That had bowed their heads so low;

That the blithesome, happy home-life,
And the light on hearth and hall,
And the laughing " Little Mischief,"
Made them thank the God of all.

THERE 'S A SHIP ON THE SEA.

THERE 's a ship on the sea. It is sailing to-night,
Sailing to-night!
And father 's aboard, and the moon is all bright,
Shining and bright!
Dear moon! he 'll be sailing for many a night—
Sailing from mother and me.
Oh! follow the ship with your silvery light,
As father sails over the sea!

AN OFFERTORY.

Oh, the beauty of the Christ-child!
The gentleness, the grace,
The smiling, loving tenderness,
The infantile embrace!
All babyhood he holdeth,
All motherhood enfoldeth, —
Yet who hath seen his face?

Oh, the nearness of the Christ-child,
When, for a sacred space,
He nestles in our very homes, —
Light of the human race!
We know him and we love him,
No man to us need prove him, —
Yet who hath seen his face?

THE BLOOM OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

At night we planted the Christmas tree
In the pretty home, all secretly;
All secretly, though merry of heart,
With many a whisper, many a start.
(For children who 'd scorn to make believe
May not sleep soundly on Christmas Eve.)

And then the tree began to bloom,
Filling with beauty the conscious room.
The branches curved in a perfect poise,
Laden with wonders that men call "toys,"
Blooming and ripening (and still no noise),
Until we merry folk stole away
To rest and dream till dawn of day.

In the morning the world was a girl and a boy,
The universe only their shouts of joy,
Till every branch and bough had bent
To yield the treasure the Christ-child sent.
And then — and then — the children flew
Into our arms, as children do,
And whispered, over and over again,
That oldest, newest, sweetest refrain,
"I love you! I love you! Yes, I love *you!*"
And hugged and scrambled, as children do.
And we said in our hearts, all secretly:
"*This* is the bloom of the Christmas tree!"

OLD SONGS.

Alone in the twilight tender,
I plan the coming days,
While the supple flames are lapping
In weird, fantastic ways;
When out of the startled darkness
There springs a single note,—
And the first light strains of a prelude
Slow into the silence float.

'T is Mother's touch! How quietly she always enters in!

With child-like throb I listen now to hear the song begin:

"*Roy's wife of Aldivalloch!*" Ah, me! The woful shame!

And "how she cheated him" I learn with honest ire and blame.

And then a moment's silence, a fallen music-page—

And gone all thought of cruel wife and sorry lover's rage.

The shadowy parlor-walls grow wide and change to
meadows fair,
For the sweet "*Bluebells of Scotland*" are waving in
the air.
The summer sky is over them, the fragrant breezes
blow,
But, ere they fade, the voice begins in cadence sad
and slow.
"*What's this dull town to me?*" it sings. "Ah,
what indeed," I sigh,—
For "Robin is not here" it sobs, in plaintive,
broken cry.
Poor, lonely lassie! weeping sore. My heart is with
her still,
When suddenly, in changeful mood, there comes a
martial thrill;
And now I know that through the land one burst
of fervor rings,
As "*Who 'll be king but Charlie?*" the sweet voice
faintly sings.
Ah, good it is to listen here, in flitting shadows hid!—
Till comes a silken rustle; and then with folded lid

The old piano silent stands,—and the wide hall's swinging light
Reveals the tall, retreating form, framed in the doorway bright.
Only a moment. Vanished now the softly-kerchiefed gown;
And once again, the firelight chasing shadows up and down,
Is all I see, as thoughtfully I lift the warm brass tongs,
And turn the embers over to the echoes of old songs.